



CONGRESSMAN GARY G. MILLER

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CONTACT: Jessica Baker
(202) 225-3201

Reclaim American Jobs Caucus responds to Obama remarks

WASHINGTON, DC – The Reclaim American Jobs Caucus reacted today to President Obama’s remarks regarding immigration. The Caucus, co-chaired by Reps. Lamar Smith, Gary Miller and Sue Myrick, works to enforce our current immigration laws, increase worksite enforcement, and encourage employer use of the E-Verify system. American citizens and legal immigrants should not have to compete with illegal workers for scarce jobs.

Rep. Lamar Smith (TX-21) said: “There are 15 million unemployed workers in America and eight million illegal immigrants in the labor force. We could cut unemployment in half simply by reclaiming the jobs taken by illegal workers! President Obama is on the wrong side of the American people on immigration. The President should support policies that help citizens and legal immigrants find the jobs they need and deserve rather than fail to enforce immigration laws. President Obama has failed to protect American jobs.

“President Obama’s words contradict his administration’s actions when it comes to immigration enforcement and border security. For example, the President has said that employers must be held accountable for hiring illegal workers. Yet under his administration, workplace enforcement is in a freefall and the Justice Department is urging the Supreme Court to stop a state from revoking the business licenses of companies that hire illegal workers. The President says that the border is more secure than ever, yet his own administration has posted signs at National Parks the border region warning Americans against the danger of smugglers. An attrition-through-enforcement approach can work, but only if the administration enforces the law.

Representative Sue Myrick (NC-09) said: “Any change in immigration policy that rewards illegal aliens with citizenship and the ability to continue working in the US is simply wrong and insulting to the millions of Americans out of a job.”

Representative Gary Miller (CA-42) said, “As the national unemployment rate continues to hover around 10 percent, it is incomprehensible that President Obama is renewing his call for so-called comprehensive immigration reform. If the federal government simply enforced existing immigration laws on the books, we could reclaim the estimated eight million jobs that illegal immigrants have stolen and give 15 million unemployed Americans more opportunities to go back to work.”

The Reclaim American Jobs Caucus noted that the number of illegal immigrants in the labor force equals more than half of the total number of unemployed in 16 states and the District of Columbia. They are Arizona, New Jersey, Maryland, Texas, Nevada, California, Utah, New York, Virginia, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Nebraska, Hawaii, Delaware and North Carolina. These states represent 53 percent of the U.S. total population.

The Reclaim American Jobs Caucus remains concerned that the Obama administration has ignored enforcement of immigration laws at the workplace. Administrative arrests are down 81% from 2008, criminal arrests are down 67%, indictments are down 73% and convictions are down 75%.

The Obama administration argues that they have increased the number of audits of employers. But audits do almost nothing to stop illegal immigration or discourage illegal hiring. Audits can result in fines, though employers consider them just the cost of doing business. Illegal workers typically are not arrested and are usually turned loose in the community to compete with citizens and legal immigrants for other jobs.

The Reclaim American Jobs Caucus noted that clear evidence exists as to the benefit of worksite enforcement. After a worksite enforcement action at Georgia's Crider Inc, the company lost over 600 illegal workers. But Crider increased wages more than \$1 an hour and within days hired legal workers. And just three weeks after a worksite enforcement action at Michael Bianco Incorporated in New Bedford, Massachusetts, 400 legal workers applied to fill the 361 positions left by illegal immigrants who were deported. The companies were forced to raise wages and recruit local employees, many of whom had previously had a difficult time finding jobs.

An Associated Press poll this month found that only 36 percent of Americans approve of the President's handling of immigration and only 42 percent of Americans approve of the way President Obama is handling unemployment. The Reclaim American Jobs Caucus recognizes that this is no coincidence—illegal immigration and unemployment are directly linked.

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