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Reformer Corner—Dave Russell

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Illegal Immigration Driving Increase in Poverty, Reports the Pew Hispanic Center

A new report issued by the Washington, D.C.-based Pew Hispanic Center confirms what most Americans already knew: The influx of unskilled illegal aliens is driving the increase in poverty in the U.S. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, illegal alien workers, who now constitute a larger share of the influx than legal immigrants, have a median income of about \$300 per week.

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From the Hill—Border Security Crucial to the War on Drugs by Rep. Ted Poe

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The initial response to FAIR Approved has been overwhelmingly positive. In fact, Rick Roberts of KFMB Radio in San Diego, one of the top rated talk show hosts in the market, is so enthusiastic that he is promoting it on his own web page: www.760kfmb.com/rick_blog.

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Raids at Six Swift Meatpacking Plants Sends Long Overdue Message to Employers

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids at Swift meatpacking facilities in six states in December resulted in the arrest of nearly 1,300 suspected illegal aliens, including many who may also be charged with document fraud and identity theft. The raid may also result in legal difficulties for Swift executives, who face potential government prosecution as well as lawsuits filed by former employees who allege that the company deliberately hired illegal aliens in an effort to depress wages for American workers.

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FAIR Launches New Program to Help Consumers Support Businesses that Do Not Hire Illegal Aliens

“FAIR Approved” Will Certify that Businesses Comply with Immigration Laws

As anyone who follows the immigration issue knows, the leading cause of mass immigration to the United States is the federal government’s longstanding failure to enforce the law against employers who hire illegal aliens. The easy availability of jobs in this country has created a powerful magnet for illegal immigration.

Because the federal government refuses to honor its commitments, millions of Americans have been turned into unwitting and unwilling accomplices to illegal immigration. Most of us have no way of knowing if the businesses we patronize are lining their own pockets and imposing burdens on the community by hiring illegal aliens. To remedy this situation, FAIR, in early January, launched a new program that will certify businesses that are voluntarily complying with laws against employing illegal aliens.

The new program, known as FAIR Approved, will certify that businesses have followed all procedures necessary to ensure that the workers they hire are citizens or legal residents of the United States. As the program progresses, FAIR Approved will develop an online registry of participating businesses so that people can support businesses in their communities that are not contributing to this nation’s illegal immigration problem.

In early January, FAIR Approved brought together business leaders in the greater Phoenix area who have volunteered to take part in the program. Working with Rusty Childress, owner of several automobile dealerships in the area, these businesspeople announced the kick-off of FAIR Approved in Phoenix.

Just as many ecology conscious consumers are willing to make an extra effort to buy environmentally friendly products and support businesses that do not unnecessarily contribute to waste and pollution, many Americans would be happy to spend their money with companies that do not contribute to the illegal immigration problem. Under FAIR Approved, doing the right thing will also make good business sense. Participating companies will attract new clients and customers, and American workers will be able to compete for jobs in their own communities.

As FAIR Approved enrolls new businesses partners, a list of participating companies will be listed on the FAIR Approved web site, www.fairapproved.com.

Pay-off to Agricultural Employers Is the First, and Probably Not the Last, Amnesty Bill Introduced in New Congress

A wide array of business and ethnic special interest groups are eagerly anticipating that the 110th Congress will be their opportunity to enact a massive illegal alien amnesty and guest worker bill. The first of these proposals, though almost certainly not the last, was the reintroduction of the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act of 2007 (AgJobs) in the both the Senate and the House. The legislation, which has been introduced in each of the last two Congresses, would grant amnesty to illegal aliens who have worked in agriculture and their families.

In addition to amnesty for those who have worked illegally in agriculture, AgJobs would provide farm owners access to millions of additional guest workers. These workers, too, would eventually become eligible for permanent U.S. residence. The Senate bill's sponsors include Democrats Dianne Feinstein (Calif.), Edward Kennedy (Mass.), Barbara Boxer (Calif.), and Republicans Larry Craig (Ida.), Mel Martinez (Fla.), and George Voinovich (Ohio). A companion bill has also been introduced in the House.

FAIR strongly opposes all legislation that grants amnesty to illegal aliens and increases the admission of guest workers without clear evidence that a labor shortage exists. Past history suggests that the AgJobs bill would be an invitation to fraud, while doing nothing to address the agricultural industry's labor problems.

A similar amnesty for agricultural workers, enacted in 1986, resulted in massive fraud. By some estimates, about 70 percent of the people who received legalization under that amnesty did so fraudulently. There is little reason to believe that the situation would be any different should AgJobs be enacted, and every reason to believe that fraud would be perpetrated on a larger scale.

In addition, the poor wages and working conditions offered by agricultural employers would almost certainly mean that, as in 1986, the workers who received amnesty will leave the agricultural sector for better paying jobs elsewhere.

Existing guest worker programs are more than adequate to meet the legitimate needs of the agricultural industry, while the industry's refusal to pay competitive wages, not a shortage of workers, is the primary reason why it has a difficult time filling jobs.

Democrats Unlikely to Fund the Border Fence

In one of the earliest indications of where the new Democratic congressional leadership stands on the matter of enforcing U.S. immigration laws, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) expressed serious doubts about whether the 700-mile border fence approved by Congress last year would ever get built. In 2006, Congress authorized construction of a security fence between the U.S. and Mexico, but without funding, the fence will not become a reality. “Appropriators will look at whether or not this is an expenditure that continues to make sense to them or whether there are other ways” to address the problem of illegal immigration, Hoyer told Congressional Quarterly.

Hoyer did not specify what the “other ways” of dealing with mass illegal immigration might entail, but based on past statements from the Democratic leadership they are likely to include a massive illegal alien amnesty and guest worker provision, and increased levels of government mandated immigration.

FAIR has always been clear that a security fence alone will not solve the problem of mass illegal immigration. Rather, the 700-mile fence authorized by Congress last year is an important component of an overall strategy to combat illegal immigration that must include strong work site and interior enforcement, and the elimination of nonemergency services and benefits for illegal aliens. The security fence is also essential to our homeland security efforts, as top intelligence and law enforcement officials have repeatedly testified before Congress that our unguarded borders present a serious risk of exploitation by terrorist organizations.

Will the New Minimum Wage Be a Floor or a Ceiling?

Congressional Budget Office Warns that Illegal Immigration Depresses Wages

At the very top of the new Democratic controlled Congress' to-do list was an increase in the minimum wage, which has stood at \$5.15 an hour for about a decade. True to her word, Speaker Nancy Pelosi shepherded a phased-in increase to \$7.25 an hour over the next two years. But while the Democrats were congratulating themselves for helping the lowest paid workers in the country get ahead, many are also planning amnesties, guest worker programs, and immigration increases that will ensure that for many workers, \$7.25 an hour is a ceiling, not a floor.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), a nonpartisan study group within Congress, warns that any legislation along the lines of the guest worker amnesty bill approved by the Senate in 2006 “would slow the growth of the wages of workers already present in the United States with whom they most closely compete.” The CBO asserts that “the large influx of foreign-born workers with less than a high school education during the past few decades probably put downward wage pressure on workers (both native and foreign-born) who also lacked a high school diploma.”

The mutually exclusive goals of the new Democratic leadership — improving wages for American workers, and passing a massive illegal alien amnesty and increasing overall immigration — illustrates the conundrum facing the new majority party. On the one hand, many congressional Democrats are committed to restoring the party to its roots as the party of working people in America. On the other hand, there is a substantial ideological wing of the party committed to multiculturalism through immigration, placing them effectively in lockstep with the unscrupulous employers who gain a “competitive edge” by recruiting and hiring cheap, illegal foreign labor at the expense of American families.

As FAIR and others committed to true comprehensive immigration reform approach the new congressional leadership, we must constantly remind them they cannot fulfill their commitments to American workers while at the same time promoting amnesty and mass immigration. Real wages for tens of millions of American workers can only rise if Congress is prepared to enforce laws against employers who hire illegal aliens and if the influx of new foreign workers is slowed.

Reformer Corner

Dave Russell

As an American, especially one with close family members living in border states, I have long been concerned about the impact that mass illegal immigration is having on our nation. As a life-long active member of a building trades union, I have also been committed to ensuring that working people in the United States are provided the opportunity to work and support their families. It was not a big stretch for me — or for most other Americans I come in contact with — to understand that controlling illegal immigration is not simply a matter of law and order, but vital to preservation of the middle class in this country. I joined FAIR 24 years ago, and over the years my activism on behalf of true immigration reform has only grown.

Activism has entailed promoting the idea of immigration enforcement to as many friends, colleagues and members of the community as possible. Among the ways that I have been able to spread the word about the need for immigration reform is through the written word. I enrolled in journalism training to become a more effective writer and have had many of my letters regarding illegal immigration published in many major newspapers.

As a life long member of the building trades I am appalled that 25 percent of construction jobs have been taken by illegal aliens. I have convinced many union leaders to object to this to congressmen and senators and, in recent years, many union locals and rank and file union members have gone on record in support of immigration enforcement and against an illegal alien amnesty. As an active union member, I have secured invitations for FAIR to speak at building trade union conferences. FAIR, and its support for American workers, has been greeted with open arms at these events, including donations and attracting new members to join.

My Goals

Replacing American workers with illegal aliens is a criminal, illegal and punishable activity. With the Democrats — the party that claims to be on the side of working Americans — back in control of Congress, the voice of union members on this issue will become even more important.

In addition, my goal is to unite American workers to protect their interests through class suits against crooked employers who undermine them by hiring illegal aliens, and punish these employers as racketeers under federal RICO statutes. Recent successful class action law suits have been very encouraging. I'm convinced that class action law suits and prison sentences will convert these law breaking employers into patriotic, law abiding Americans.

I believe that what I am fighting for is the future of our country and the future security of American workers. These are goals I will not abandon easily.

ICE Finds Illegal Aliens Are Arrested an Average of Six Times

A new report from the Inspector General of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) indicates that criminal illegal aliens continue to commit crimes in this country even after they have been arrested. Using a sample group of the 262,105 illegal aliens who were incarcerated in 2004 (an appalling statistic in and of itself), ICE determined that 73 percent of them were subsequently re-arrested. Of the group sampled, these criminal aliens were arrested on average six times.

ICE could not say for sure whether these illegal alien criminals had been released by local authorities back onto the streets, or whether they were deported and had re-entered the country. ICE conducted the investigation to determine how effectively the \$287 million a year in federal money given to state and local governments under the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) was being spent.

In return for federal assistance to offset the costs of dealing with criminal aliens, state and local governments are supposed to work with federal authorities to identify illegal aliens in their custody. In some places the money is better spent than in others. Nancy Pelosi's home town of San Francisco received more than \$1 million in spite of the fact that ICE agents are barred from inspecting county jail records.

Around the Country

Texas

Following a growing trend around the nation, the Texas legislature is preparing a series of measures to help the state cope with the federal government's failure to control illegal immigration. More than 20 immigration-related bills are slated for consideration by the state legislature in 2007. These bills include a proposed reversal of a state policy that allows illegal aliens in Texas to attend state run colleges and universities at in-state tuition rates; denial of food stamp and housing assistance to illegal aliens; and imposition of fees on money transfers outside the United States. Much of the pressure to adopt state measures to deal with illegal immigration is the result of work by a strong immigration reform activist base in Texas, many with close ties to FAIR.

Virginia

Virginia's attorney general, Robert F. McDonnell, is seeking state legislation and an executive order from the governor to allow police around the state to obtain immigration enforcement training from the federal government. Pressure to train local law enforcement departments to identify and detain suspected illegal aliens has been growing in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., where the illegal alien population has skyrocketed in recent years. The growing problem has sparked the growth of local immigration reform groups in Virginia. In 2005, FAIR worked closely with the Virginia Coalition for Immigration Reform and other activists to oppose construction of a day laborer hiring center in Herndon. Local officials defied public sentiment and were swept out of office by voters in 2006. Other local officials seem to have gotten the message, but Gov. Tim Kaine has said he will not sign the executive order requested by Attorney General McDonnell.

Arizona

A group of state lawmakers, led by Majority Leader Thayer Verschoor, is seeking legislation that would require all employers in Arizona to verify the immigration status of their new employees. The proposal is intended to address the magnet created by companies that hire illegal aliens and force state taxpayers to provide services to these workers and their families. "The people of Arizona have made it very clear that if the feds aren't doing it, then we need to step up." Mandatory verification for all employers in the state would also eliminate the unfair advantage that businesses that break the law enjoy over those that are law abiding.

Illegal Immigration Driving Increase in Poverty, Reports the Pew Hispanic Center

A new report issued by the Washington, D.C. -based Pew Hispanic Center confirms what most Americans already knew: The influx of unskilled illegal aliens is driving the increase in poverty in the U.S. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, illegal alien workers, who now constitute a larger share of the influx than legal immigrants, have a median income of about \$300 per week.

The Pew Hispanic Center's findings largely confirm research from FAIR and others who advocate immigration enforcement and overall reductions in immigration levels. A virtually limitless supply of labor will inevitably depress wages and working conditions. Moreover, because a large share of illegal aliens entering the U.S. labor market is unskilled and lacks formal education, there is little possibility that it will ever move ahead. Thus, a massive amnesty promoted by President Bush and leading congressional Democrats would only fuel greater poverty and income disparity in America.

The Pew research also belies assertions by the illegal alien advocacy network that these workers contribute more in taxes than they use in services. At an average annual income of about \$15,000, workers — legal or illegal — pay virtually nothing in taxes.

Signs of a Political Stalemate on Immigration in the New Congress

With the Democrats taking control of Congress and President Bush long on record supporting a massive illegal alien amnesty and guest worker program, many pundits have assumed that a deal would be struck in 2007. Not so fast. The coalition in support of an amnesty and guest worker package has some San Andreas-like fault lines running through it.

Many groups that have strong ties to the Democrats want amnesty without guest workers, while powerful business groups will not sign off on any deal that does not include virtually unlimited access to foreign guest workers. Organized labor contributed \$42 million to Democratic campaign coffers in 2006, and they expect a seat at the table. AFL-CIO associate general counsel Ana Avendado states, "We don't believe our elected representatives are ready to adopt legislation that creates paths for corporations to import workers and reduce working standards in the United States."

Big business interests, with even fatter checkbooks and a cushier seat at the negotiating table, are just as adamant about getting what they want from an immigration bill. "The industry will oppose a bill that doesn't have a good temporary worker program in it," says Randel Johnson, vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

While the AFL-CIO leadership is on record supporting amnesty for illegal aliens, it is not entirely clear that they represent the views of their constituent unions and the majority of rank and file union members. Last September, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the largest construction trades union, went on record opposing both amnesty and guest worker programs.

FAIR believes that these significant rifts within the coalition pushing for a guest worker amnesty bill can prevent any such legislation from moving forward. FAIR is establishing close ties with many labor groups around the country that recognize that any legislation along the lines of the bill approved by the Senate in 2006 would seriously compromise the security of middle class workers in America. Together with the majority of Republicans in Congress, labor oriented Democrats could realistically form a coalition to block a guest worker amnesty bill in 2007.

“Totalization” Agreement with Mexico Could Hasten the Collapse of the Social Security System

Early in President Bush’s second term he announced that he was prepared to spend “political capital” on an effort to revamp America’s Social Security system. The administration’s plan, in many people’s view, may have been seriously flawed, but no one disputes that the system is in real trouble. The Social Security system owes current retirees and workers an estimated \$14 trillion, but has assets of only about \$3.5 trillion.

As if \$10.5 trillion wasn’t a big enough shortfall, the Bush Administration has decided to follow through on a “totalization” agreement with Mexico, which would allow citizens of that country, including illegal aliens, to collect U.S. Social Security benefits, based on having worked in this country for as little as 18 months! (American workers, by contrast, must have worked and paid into the Social Security system for a total of 10 years over their lifetimes in order to be eligible for retirement benefits.) This totalization agreement will take effect automatically unless the House of Representatives or the Senate adopts a resolution of disapproval within 60 legislative days after the President signs it — which he has not yet done.

The United States has totalization agreements with other countries in order to prevent retirees from being taxed twice on the same retirement income. None of the other agreements involves a country with a retirement program that is so different from ours, or covering as many workers as the one with Mexico would. Moreover, in addition to the millions of Mexicans who have worked in this country legally and illegally, countless millions more could easily defraud the program. It would be a virtual impossibility to prove or disprove claims based on contributions to fraudulent Social Security accounts. Rather than collapse the system in 20 or 30 years, as most economist project, the totalization agreement with Mexico could bankrupt the system even earlier.

FAIR believes that the totalization agreement could present one of the first big tests of the new Congress’ commitment to representing the interests of ordinary working Americans. Preserving the Social Security system and securing benefits for all Americans who have paid into the program has been a longstanding cornerstone of the Democrats’ domestic policy.

FAIR is working to educate Congress and the American public about this perilous agreement in an effort to kill it. A helpful step was taken by Senator John Ensign (R-Nev.) who introduced a bill (S.43) in January to require that any Totalization agreement receive approval from both houses of Congress before it could become law. We strongly urge FAIR members who are also members of other organizations, especially AARP, to demand that they actively oppose adoption of the totalization agreement with Mexico. As the largest voluntary membership organization in the country, it is critical that AARP lend its considerable voice to the effort to prevent implementation of an agreement that would devastate current as well as future American retirees.

From the Hill

Border Security Crucial to the War on Drugs

Rep. Ted Poe

The United States has engaged and defeated many adversaries in the war on drugs.

Now, we must face another enemy in this battle, one that continues to pose a threat at all of our borders.

In order to stop these criminals, who illegally bring drugs into our country, we need to stop them at their points of departure.

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the U.S./Mexico border is the primary point of entry for cocaine shipments that are smuggled into the United States. Recent interagency intelligence assessments state that approximately 65 percent of the cocaine smuggled into our country crosses the southwest border.

Last November, U.S. Customs and Border Protection patrol agents chased criminals in a dump truck containing 3 tons of marijuana. As the truck headed back toward Mexico, it got stuck in the Rio Grande River. When agents sought to unload the truck, the driver, who originally fled, returned with an army of heavily armed men wearing Mexican military uniforms and carrying military-style weapons. This army backed the agents away and then bulldozed the truck back to Mexico.

During the month of January, border patrol agents of Brewster County, Texas, seized more than \$2 million worth of cocaine from three Mexican nationals who were transporting it into the U.S. in backpacks.

If stories like these aren't enough, we now know that drug-trafficking has been occurring in the ground beneath our borders.

Recently, California officials discovered four underground tunnels that connect the U.S. to Mexico.

Authorities spent an entire day removing 2 tons of marijuana from a tunnel that began inside a warehouse in Tijuana, Mexico, and ended in a vacant building near San Diego, California.

This tunnel was 2,400 feet in length, about 5 feet wide and high enough for an adult to stand in. The most alarming information, however, was that the tunnel was equipped with electricity, ventilation and a concrete floor.

The creation of this tunnel, and others like it, took time, careful planning and resources. It went on right under our border and we didn't even know it.

These discoveries are proof that drug smugglers are undertaking extreme measures to move their contraband into our country.

U.S. border patrol agents are on the front lines of this war on drugs every single day.

When I visited the Texas-Mexico border last year, I saw firsthand the peril these agents face on a daily basis. It is incomprehensible that this combat zone exists on our very own soil.

To make matters worse, border patrol agents have been warned by federal officials that they could be the target of assassins hired by drug smugglers. These criminals are angry at U.S. agents for protecting our borders. As a result, they want to end the lives of these brave men and women in uniform.

What will it take to make us realize we have a serious problem at our borders? How many innocent people must lose their lives at the hands of drug smugglers before we decide to take action?

We must send a message to these criminals that we will not tolerate them entering our country. We can do this by securing our borders and letting them know the U.S. is closed to their illegal business.

You can write Congressman Poe at 1605 Longworth HOB, Washington, DC 20515 or call his district office at (409) 212-1997.

Immigration Will Be an Issue in the 2008 Campaign!

Tancredo Inches Closer to Declaring a Run for the White House

Five-term Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo, who has established a national reputation as a champion of true immigration reform, moved to the brink of declaring his candidacy for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination by forming an exploratory committee. An exploratory committee will allow Tancredo to begin raising money and setting up a campaign organization.

In recent months Tancredo has made frequent trips to some of the early primary and caucus battleground states, such as Iowa and New Hampshire. After meeting with people in those states, Tancredo reported that true immigration reform is a top priority with many voters who are disappointed that none of the leading candidates from either party is representing their views and interests on this important national issue.

During his time in Congress, Tancredo has been the most vocal and public proponent of enforcing and strengthening laws against illegal immigration, and for a major overhaul of the nation's legal immigration policies. Although veteran newsman Bob Schieffer, who moderated the final 2004 presidential debate between George Bush and John Kerry, noted that immigration was the issue voters most wanted to hear the candidates discuss, the immigration issue remained conspicuously absent from the campaign.

Tancredo's entry into the 2008 race promises to change that. "I'm going to [run] because I believe that there is a void in the present panoply of people who are seeking that office. We need people who are going to offer the American people a, sort of, common-sense agenda," Tancredo told Fox News. Topping his "common-sense agenda" is immigration, the issue "that has propelled me for a long time," Tancredo said. In entering the race, Tancredo will force other leading candidates, like John McCain and Rudolph Giuliani, both advocates of amnesty and increased immigration, to justify those positions to the American public.

FAIR cannot and does not endorse candidates for public office. However, throughout the organization's history, we have strongly advocated that immigration policy be a part of the national dialogue. By refusing to address this critical national issue in campaigns and give voters a clear choice, both parties have done a disservice to the American public. Immigration, along with a handful of other important issues, ranks near the top of the list of voters' concerns. With a candidate committed to discussing this issue, perhaps 2008 will finally be the year that all candidates for public office will be forced to address immigration policy in a serious way.

Prominent Radio Talk Show Host Promotes FAIR Approved

The initial response to FAIR Approved has been overwhelmingly positive. In fact, Rick Roberts of KFMB Radio in San Diego, one of the top rated talk show hosts in the market, is so enthusiastic that he is promoting it on his own web page: www.760kfmb.com/rick_blog.

FINALLY!

Finally I have an answer to the question many of you have ask me everyday ... "WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP SUPPORT AMERICA? What can I do to support businesses that actually follow the immigration laws of this country?"

Well, now I have the answer... JOIN RICK ROBERTS AND FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform) in the "FAIR APPROVED PROGRAM."

What is the FAIR APPROVED PROGRAM?

Basically, businesses that hire legal citizens, businesses that follow the law, join up and get screened, get approved, and then we tell you, the consumer, that you can do business with this company without worrying that you are supporting illegal immigration.

Are you a business that wants to get involved?

E-mail me at rickroberts@kfmb.com or comment on the blog. We need your name, number, and business name.

Coming soon, we will start the approval of business, and you, The Rick Roberts Show listeners will get to see a list of businesses you can use, with my stamp of approval.

Raids at Six Swift Meatpacking Plants Sends Long Overdue Message to Employers

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids at Swift meatpacking facilities in six states in December resulted in the arrest of nearly 1,300 suspected illegal aliens, including many who may also be charged with document fraud and identity theft. The raid may also result in legal difficulties for Swift executives, who face potential government prosecution as well as lawsuits filed by former employees who allege that the company deliberately hired illegal aliens in an effort to depress wages for American workers.

The stepped-up effort to bust companies that have flagrantly violated laws against hiring illegal aliens appears to be motivated not by a desire on the part of the Bush administration to enforce immigration laws, but rather to ratchet up pressure to enact an amnesty and expanded guest worker program. In announcing the actions taken against Swift, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff stated that the raid highlighted the need for an increase in guest workers, which he claimed would alleviate the demand for illegal aliens.

Within a few days of the raids, Chertoff's assertions were proven false. Reports from Greeley, Colorado, site of one of the Swift plants target by ICE, indicated that American workers began lining up to replace the illegal aliens who had been working there. Like most of the other jobs that President Bush and others argue Americans will not do, the response of people in Greeley and elsewhere proves that Americans are eager to take those jobs, if they are afforded the opportunity to work for living wages.

Similarly, 18 former employees at Swift's Cactus, Texas, facility filed a Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) suit against Swift, alleging that the company's policy of hiring illegal aliens was a deliberate effort to depress their wages. The plaintiffs claim that as a result of Swift's pattern and practice of hiring illegal workers, wages have dropped from about \$20 an hour to about \$12 an hour.

The use of RICO suits against employers who knowingly use illegal alien labor in order to depress workers' wages was first initiated by Chicago-based attorney Howard Foster, who has worked closely with FAIR in efforts to hold such employers accountable. All of the federal appellate courts that have considered the issue have validated the use of "alien-smuggling" RICO litigation by private parties, and several favorable monetary settlements have been achieved by US workers and businesses harmed by the employment of unauthorized aliens.

In addition to the 1,282 people detained on suspicion of being in the U.S. illegally, 220 face charges for using fraudulent documents and identity theft. The sale of fraudulent documents is alleged to have taken place right on the premises of the Swift facilities.

