



***Fighting for Fundamental
Fairness and Due Process for
Our Immigrant Communities***

www.immigrantjusticenetwork.org

For Immediate Release - April 18, 2013

Contact: Alisa Wellek, awellek@immigrantdefenseproject.org 212.725.6421 917-727-8444
or Gebe Martinez, gmartinez@immigrantdefenseproject.org 703-731-9505

**Senate “Gang of 8” Immigration Bill Needs More Work to Ensure
Fundamental Fairness for All Immigrants**

Immigrant Justice Network applauds start of immigration debate

WASHINGTON, DC -- The long-delayed congressional debate over vital immigration reform begins this week following the filing of a bipartisan measure that creates a roadmap to citizenship for a portion of the 11 million immigrants now in the country without documents. However, more work lies ahead to ensure that Congress upholds the fundamental American values of fairness and due process as part of any reforms, according to the Immigrant Justice Network, a collaboration of the Immigrant Defense Project, Immigrant Legal Resource Center, and National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild.

These organizations, which promote fundamental rights for immigrants accused of or convicted of a crime, note that many parts of the bill repeat and expand the same policy and political mistakes that led to record number deportations, including expulsion of many long time lawful permanent residents. There were more deportations in the past 10 years than in the last 100 years combined, under a system that eroded due process and increased unchecked militarization of the border.

“The Senate bill includes some restoration of due process and judicial discretion, especially for considerations regarding detention,” said Alisa Wellek, of the Immigrant Defense Project. “The promise of immigration reform requires further improvements to judicial waivers that would allow judges to weigh the individual circumstances of a person’s case before she is permanently separated from her family and exiled from the United States.”

Under our current unfair legal system for immigrants, thousands of Green card holders, asylum seekers and undocumented are prohibited from presenting their entire case before an immigration judge because they are accused of having committed “aggravated felonies,” an immigration legal term that includes crimes that are neither aggravated nor felonies. An immigrant with an aggravated felony conviction is automatically deported and exiled forever.



“Reform legislation must amend harsh criminal bars preventing people from staying on the path to citizenship and ensure that so-called aggravated felonies no longer trigger mandatory detention and deportation,” said Robert Johnson, former President of the National District Attorneys Association. “It is inappropriate and unjust for immigration penalties to far surpass the criminal sanctions for these offenses.”

A March 2013 national poll conducted by the Campaign for Accountable, Moral and Balanced Immigration (CAMBIO), of which IJN is a member, found that eight in ten (80%) agreed “we should uphold American values of due process and human rights, which means immigrants should not be deported without a judge being able to evaluate the circumstances of their case.”

“The American public supports the fundamental values of fairness and equal protection, and we believe it is in the interest of Congress to follow their lead,” said Angie Junck of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center.

