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Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice Calls on Rep. Gutierrez to Take the Lead on Immigration Reform Legislation

On Citizenship Day, Communities across the country call for real action on comprehensive immigration reform

WASHINGTON – Today, hundreds of immigrant leaders and representatives are calling upon Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) to lead a strategy in the coming weeks that will get specific comprehensive immigration reform legislation introduced and moving through the halls of Congress. With the overwhelming support of communities across the country, Rep. Gutierrez will be asked to make the commitment at an event in Washington organized by the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) and the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (a network of pro-immigrant advocacy groups) as part of their Citizenship Day celebration.

Rep. Gutierrez played a pivotal role in the Familias Unidas interfaith tour earlier this year that introduced families separated from loved ones by our broken immigration system to his colleagues in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and House Democratic Leadership and helped build compassion and support for immigration reform.

“Alabama communities need a bill that provides a workable solution and fixes our broken immigration system,” said Zayne Smith, Immigration Policy Fellow at Alabama Appleseed. “We want to support Rep. Gutierrez and Congress in taking bold action to break through the years-long stalemate on Capital Hill.”

Alabama Appleseed said they expect the Gutierrez’s effort to lead to a progressive immigration bill which they defined as having the following features:

- a earned path to citizenship;
- elimination of the family immigration backlogs that keep people waiting years and decades for legal entry;
- a system to modernize the process by which visas are allocated so that they reflect actual economic needs;
- protection of worker rights for native-born workers and immigrants;
- restoration of basic due process rights and protection of basic rights and liberties;
- enforcement that respects these rights and restores confidence in the immigration system; and effective and innovative immigrant integration programs

“This is a pivotal time for America, Alabama and our communities,” Smith said. “There is a greater need now, than ever before to address the broken immigration system. Now we are asking Rep. Gutierrez to step up to the plate again to get things moving in Congress for an immigration reform bill. We hope members of the Alabama delegation join in him in making the passage of an immigration bill a top priority.”

While a great deal of attention has been on health care reform – and rightly so – the urgent need for immigration reform has not diminished. If anything, the acrimony, deception and scapegoating of immigrants in the health care debate has underscored the need for a comprehensive solution that resolves the immigration issue. Immigrants, faith leaders, businesses, labor unions, progressive groups, and a broad coalition across the political spectrum want solutions to our current immigration mess.

“We need smart, sensible, American solutions to the issues facing American communities, and that includes immigrants,” Smith said. “We take citizenship very seriously and want to help shape the direction of our nation.”

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Alabama Appleseed is a non-profit, non-partisan organization founded in 1999 to identify significant needs in the State of Alabama, tackle their root causes, and craft practical, lasting solutions to systemic problems through legal advocacy, community involvement, and policy expertise.