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## **Latino Leaders Calls on Senate Leaders to Amend Temporary Worker Program to Guarantee Passage of a Strong and Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

*– McCain-Kennedy and HR 4437 have polarized the debate –*

**Washington, D.C.** – The Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition, the Hispanic Business Roundtable (HBR) and the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Religious Leaders (CONLAMIC) today urged the Senate to seek compromise language on a viable Temporary Worker Program as part of comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

“The McCain-Kennedy legislation and HR 4437 have polarized the debate in such a way that passage of comprehensive immigration is doubtful at this time,” said TLC President Robert G. Deposada. “We urge the Senate to build on the consensus of border security and seek compromise language on the Temporary Worker Program similar to that proposed by Senators Cornyn and Kyl. These provisions would focus on not rewarding illegal behavior, and not sending the wrong message to future immigrants, but at the same time making sure that reform includes a solid foundation for continued economic growth.”

“Everyone agrees that our immigration system is broken and needs to be reformed now,” said *HBR President Honorio Padron of Chicago*. “Yet the extremist on both sides of the aisle have made a tactical decision to make sure that no solution is reached in order to keep the issue alive for political campaigns, at the expense of our national and economic security.

“While there are very strong elements in the McCain-Kennedy legislation, some of the more lenient provision on access to citizenship in their bill have fueled the fire of the more radical elements and polarized the current debate. And so has the legislation passed by the House, H.R. 4437,” Deposada added. “Seeking a compromise that focuses on strong border security with a viable Temporary Worker Program, will help push aside radical demagogues on both sides of the aisle and guarantee passage of comprehensive reform to our immigration laws in order to strengthen our national security and promote economic growth, without rewarding illegal behavior and reducing the demand for illegal workers.”

TLC, HBR and CONLAMIC urged Senators to pass strong enforcement provisions to punish illegal behavior and make sure that future immigrants do not find incentives to cross the border illegally in order to seek employment, when there are legal means to enter this country to fill available jobs. The groups urged Senators to design a viable and enforceable mechanism so that employers can only hire individuals who are in this country legally, increase the number of border patrol agents and financial resources for the agency, including increasing detention facilities and physical barriers along the border. “In order for these reforms to be effective, you need to set up the mechanism so that we can match willing workers with willing employers only after it has been proven that workers in the U.S. are not available to feel those jobs,” said *TLC Board Member Juan Carlos Benitez, former Special Counsel for Immigration Related Unfair Employment Practices at the U.S. Justice Department*. “A Temporary Worker Program, similar to that proposed by Senators Cornyn and Kyl, must be included in any final bill.”

The Senate should also pass language that penalizes individual currently in this country illegally by imposing serious fines if they want to participate in a Temporary Worker Program, and require that for any path to permanent residence or citizenship, these individuals would be required to apply from their country of origin. The Senate should also consider banning future immigrants who enter this country illegally from having access to U.S. citizenship, as an incentive against future illegal immigration.

The 2005 National Latino Survey showed that a majority of Hispanic registered voters support comprehensive initiatives, including those that require legal entry into the U.S. in order to find a job, do not reward illegal entry, provide increased border patrol agents on the southern border, does not allow a path to citizenship for individuals who crossed the border illegally unless they reapply from their country of origin, and establish workable and enforceable employer laws that require hiring of legal workers.

“Any final legislation on immigration reform needs to focus on both security and prosperity. But at the same time we need to make sure we do not reward illegal behavior or send the wrong message to future immigrants,” said *CONLAMIC President Reverend Miguel Rivera of New Jersey*. “A temporary worker program needs to be a key component of any reform effort to make sure that we reduce the demand for illegal workers and keeps our economy growing. However, people who entered this country illegally must not be rewarded. Fines and demanding that those who entered this country illegally should be required to apply from their country of origin if they want a path to permanent residence or citizenship, are provisions that should be included in final language in order to send a clear message to future immigrants that illegal immigration is not an option. Further, there must be resources assigned to improving the processing of Temporary Worker program applications, in order to reduce the backlog of needed workers seeking to temporarily migrate to the U.S. legally.”

“In order to reduce the demand for illegal labor, we must create legal means for individuals to work in this country temporarily and return to their country of origin, after it has been proven that workers in the U.S. are not available for those jobs,” said *TLC Board member Sal Gomez of Denver, Colorado*. “While it is important that businesses are held accountable, there needs to be clear cut, consistent, functional and enforceable policy directed at business use of temporary immigrant workers. Once this is in place, it should be enforced vigorously. This way the demand for illegal immigration will be seriously reduced and our border patrol can focus their attention on preventing drug smugglers and terrorists from entering this country.”

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The Latino Coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. TLC was established to address policy issues that directly affect the well-being of Hispanics in the United States. TLC’s agenda is to develop and promote policies that will foster economic equivalency and enhance overall business, economic, and social development of Hispanics. For more detailed information on The Latino Coalition and the 2005 survey, please visit our website at [www.TheLatinoCoalition.com](http://www.TheLatinoCoalition.com).

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