



June 18, 2013

OPPOSE H.R. 2278, THE “SAFE” ACT

Dear Member of the House Judiciary Committee:

We write to express our strong opposition to H.R. 2278, the “Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act” of 2013. We are dismayed that the Committee would attempt to move forward with such a heavy-handed and irresponsible piece of legislation, one that stands in very stark contrast to the thoughtful, credible, and bipartisan approach to immigration that is currently under way in the Senate.

H.R. 2278’s single-minded focus appears to be the widespread location, detention, and deportation of immigrants. It does not fix – nor is it even a serious attempt to fix – the widespread problems with our nation’s immigration system. In many respects, it would make the problems worse. It certainly does not create a realistic road to citizenship for the millions of undocumented immigrants who are living and working peacefully in our communities.

The flaws in H.R. 2278 are numerous and significant, making us – and the communities we represent – question whether the Committee is truly interested in bipartisan immigration reform. For example:

- H.R. 2278 would effectively criminalize unlawful presence in the United States. The millions of aspiring citizens who could apply for legalization under the Senate bill – to everyone’s benefit – would instead be subject to criminal prosecution. This is simply a recasting of the bill passed by the House in 2005, H.R. 4437, which was rightfully stopped from further consideration.
- It would criminalize otherwise innocent behavior. For example, the incredibly broad language in Sec. 314 governing immigrant smuggling and other provisions would make it possible for a U.S citizen teenager to face prosecution for merely driving to the movies with his sister if she happens to be an unauthorized immigrant.
- It would vest sweeping immigration enforcement authority in the hands of state and local police officers, without adequate federal oversight. Local police could act like immigration agents even though they are neither qualified nor trained in understanding our complicated immigration laws. As a result, the bill would make communities less safe, as immigrant communities, along with communities of color

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is the nation’s oldest and most diverse coalition of civil and human rights organizations. Founded in 1950, it consists of more than 200 national organizations representing persons of color, women, children, organized labor, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the LGBT community, and major religious groups.

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(e.g., Latino, Asian American, African American, Arab-American) would be reluctant to turn to the police if they were victimized or witnessed a crime. Breeding distrust of law enforcement decreases rather than increases public safety.

- It would lead to racial profiling and wrongful detention, because those who “look unauthorized” would be subject to law enforcement stops, arrests, and detention. On the heels of a court ruling against Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, AZ, determining that this approach led to widespread racial profiling and discrimination, the proposal to nationalize such policies is extremely troubling.

Again, we strongly urge you to reject H.R. 2278 and instead resume the efforts to move forward with a credible bipartisan proposal. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Rob Randhava, Senior Counsel, at (202) 466-6058.

Sincerely,



Wade Henderson
President & CEO



Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President