



Reclaiming Our Communities Toolkit



Fighting for Immigrant Rights
at the Local Level:
Facts, Tools and Ideas for Action



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FIRM: Who We Are

The Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM), a project of the Center for Community Change (CCC), is led by low-income immigrant and non-immigrant grassroots community based organizations working for immigration reform and immigrant rights. FIRM is dedicated to organizing and building grassroots power and leadership.

FIRM seeks comprehensive immigration reform that recognizes the rights of all people and fully appreciates immigrants' vast contributions. It also works to strengthen the capacity of grassroots immigrant organizations and increase immigrant's civic participation. Formed under CCC's campaign on issues of poverty, welfare and low-wage work, FIRM broadens the framework of immigration and immigrant rights to include an anti-poverty social justice agenda.

What We Stand For:

- Providing a Path to Permanent Resident Status and Citizenship for All Members of Our Communities.
- Reuniting Families and Reducing Immigration Backlogs.
- Providing Opportunities for Safe Future Migration and Maintaining Worker Protections.
- Respecting the Safety and Security of All in Immigration Law Enforcement.
- Recognizing Immigrants' Full Humanity and Eliminating Barriers to Full Participation.
- Restoring Fundamental Civil Rights of Immigrants.
- Protecting the Rights of Refugees and Asylees.
- Economic Justice for all workers, especially low-wage workers.
- No to Criminalization of Immigrants and Future Workers.

Immigrant Organizing Committee Members:

(Governing Body of FIRM)

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Arizona Coalition for Migrant Rights | • Nebraska Appleseed |
| • CAUSA/PCUN | • New Jersey Immigration Policy Network |
| • Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles | • New York Immigration Coalition |
| • Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition | • Northwest Federation of Community Organizations/Idaho Community Action Network |
| • Florida Immigrant Coalition | • People Acting for Communities Together |
| • Gamaliel Foundation | • Sunflower Community Action |
| • Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights | • Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition |
| • Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition | • Voces de la Frontera |
| • Michigan Organizing Project | • Youth Changing A Nation |
| • National Korean American Service & Education Consortium | |



History of the Push for Local Anti-Immigrant Ordinances

Persecuting some of the most vulnerable people in our society has become an unfortunate trend of late in cities and towns across the United States. In fewer than six months, over 90 U.S. local governments have introduced, passed, or considered introduction of 105 ordinances that target hard-working immigrants and their children. (*See chart and maps pages 6-10*) This unprecedented wave of unconstitutional ordinances flies in the face of the massive mobilizations last year. In the spring of 2006, millions of immigrants and their allies hit the streets in defiance of hateful anti-immigrant measures proposed by federal officials. As we enter a new year, it is critical that we come together to fight this latest attack on our common rights and the integrity of our communities.

These mean-spirited efforts seek to intimidate immigrant families, coming at a high moral and financial cost to the communities where ordinances have been proposed. Technically, these ordinances attempt to prohibit undocumented immigrants from finding housing or employment in their towns, as well as requiring all city documents to be in English. These ordinances punish immigrant communities, inciting fear and distrust among local residents, pushing people out of their homes and jobs, and bringing unnecessary financial burdens to towns across the country. That is why the Fair Immigration Reform Movement has developed this *Reclaiming Our Communities Tool Kit* as a series of instruments to help organizations fight off these attacks on their communities, and help us move towards effective and just immigration reform.

The movement of local governments attempting to scapegoat immigrants and their children has not surfaced out of thin air. It has been orchestrated by anti-immigration activists and local elected officials beginning in May, 2006, in San Bernardino, CA. Joseph Turner, the founder of the California-based anti-immigrant organization, Save Our State, authored the original Illegal Immigrant Relief Act (IIRA). The act, which became the model for so many other cities, sought to fine businesses and landlords who employ or house undocumented immigrants. The act also sought to establish English as the official language of the local government. Turner and Save Our State's efforts to force the city council of San Bernardino to vote on the ordinance was successfully thwarted by a coalition that included the American Civil Liberties Union and a host of immigrant rights organizations in the region. Despite this initial failure, Turner's initiative did not fade away. Rather, anti-immigrant activists have orchestrated media and internet campaigns that have resulted in the ordinance, and ones like it, being introduced in cities and towns in over 20 states.

The first politician to vigorously pursue passage of the IIRA was Mayor Lou Barletta of Hazelton, PA. Barletta became an overnight sensation with the anti-immigrant movement by championing this effort on conservative talk radio and television programs. An effective legal challenge in Hazelton, brought by a coalition of legal advocates and local organizations, has helped stall the ordinance. Despite strong resistance from communities and legal organizations,



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local governments continue to seek ways to enact general principles in the IIRA. As a rare exception, these proposed measures are being drafted and introduced with no input from local businesses, property owners, community organizations, or local residents, and the simple introduction of the IIRA or a similar measure is resulting in an exodus of immigrants from the area, both documented and undocumented alike.

There is good news. Community organizations are fighting back. Coalitions are being built, media strategies hatched, and legal challenges filed. The Florida Immigration Coalition succeeded in building coalitions in Avon Park and Palm Bay, and was able to defeat anti-immigrant proposals in both cities. In Tennessee, the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition have fought vigorously to defeat both a housing and an employment ordinance. Organizers in Beaufort, SC, have worked hard to push the city council to abandon its plans for an employment ordinance. Lawsuits pending in Riverside, NJ, Valley Park, MO, and Escondido, CA, have been successful in temporarily blocking the implementation of ordinances that have passed in these towns.

The next step is for us to move to the offensive in 2007 and beyond, introducing pro-immigrant ordinances that promote the well-being and integration of hardworking immigrants and their families, and ultimately enriching the entire community. This is an important and urgent opportunity for pro-immigrant activists to transform the hate and fear of the anti-immigrant movement into positive, lasting reform. This toolkit is meant to help organizers in local communities fight off anti-immigrant ordinances and move to the offensive by pushing immigrant friendly ordinances.

Please be sure to visit our website www.fairimmigration.org for the most recent version of the toolkit, maps, and charts.

For technical assistance, help strategizing and/or connections to other groups, please contact Nicola Wells nwells@communitychange.org or George Goehl ggoehl@communitychange.org



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Types of Local Anti-Immigrant Ordinances

<u>Type</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number of Towns/Status</u>
Housing Only	1) Limits the number of individuals (who are not related) that may live together 2) Fines landlords who rent to undocumented individuals - Some of these ordinances now require all renting residents to register a “renter’s permit” to certify resident status	Passed: 5; Pending: 1; Defeated: 6
Employment Only	1) Fines businesses that employ undocumented immigrants a) some ordinances carry fines, others don’t; still others may restrict business licenses b) as a way to appease local businesses, many ordinances provide no enforcement mechanism; others encourage local residents to report infringements to local enforcers 2) Another form revokes the contracts of any city contractors that employ undocumented immigrants a) some ordinances make contractors sign a form saying that they don’t employ undocumented workers b) other ordinances call for contractors to provide the paperwork of their employees 3) Requires those who hire off-site day laborers to register with the city, display a certificate in their car windows, and present written terms of employment to workers 4) Requires employers to verify the documentation of workers using the Basic Pilot Program, or other verification method	Passed: 10; Pending: 6; Defeated: 8



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<u>Type</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number of Towns/Status</u>
English Only	Establishes English as the official language of all government departments. This ordinance is often passed simply as an anti-immigrant measure, a tool of intimidation, as well as a sign that immigrants are not welcome.	Passed: 9; Pending 1; Defeated: 4
MIX – H and EM or H and E	Ordinances that include both employment and housing or housing and English-only provisions	Passed: 5; Pending: 2; Defeated: 4
MIX – H and EM and En	Ordinances mix all three major types -- a.k.a. HAZELTON MODEL Act (IIRA) - HAZELTON MODEL	Passed: 4; Pending 6; Defeated: 7

THE NUMBERS

(as of 1/3/07)

TOTAL PASSED: 35 (includes 2 ordinances with limited information)

TOTAL DEFEATED: 35 (includes 5 ordinances tabled before drafting)

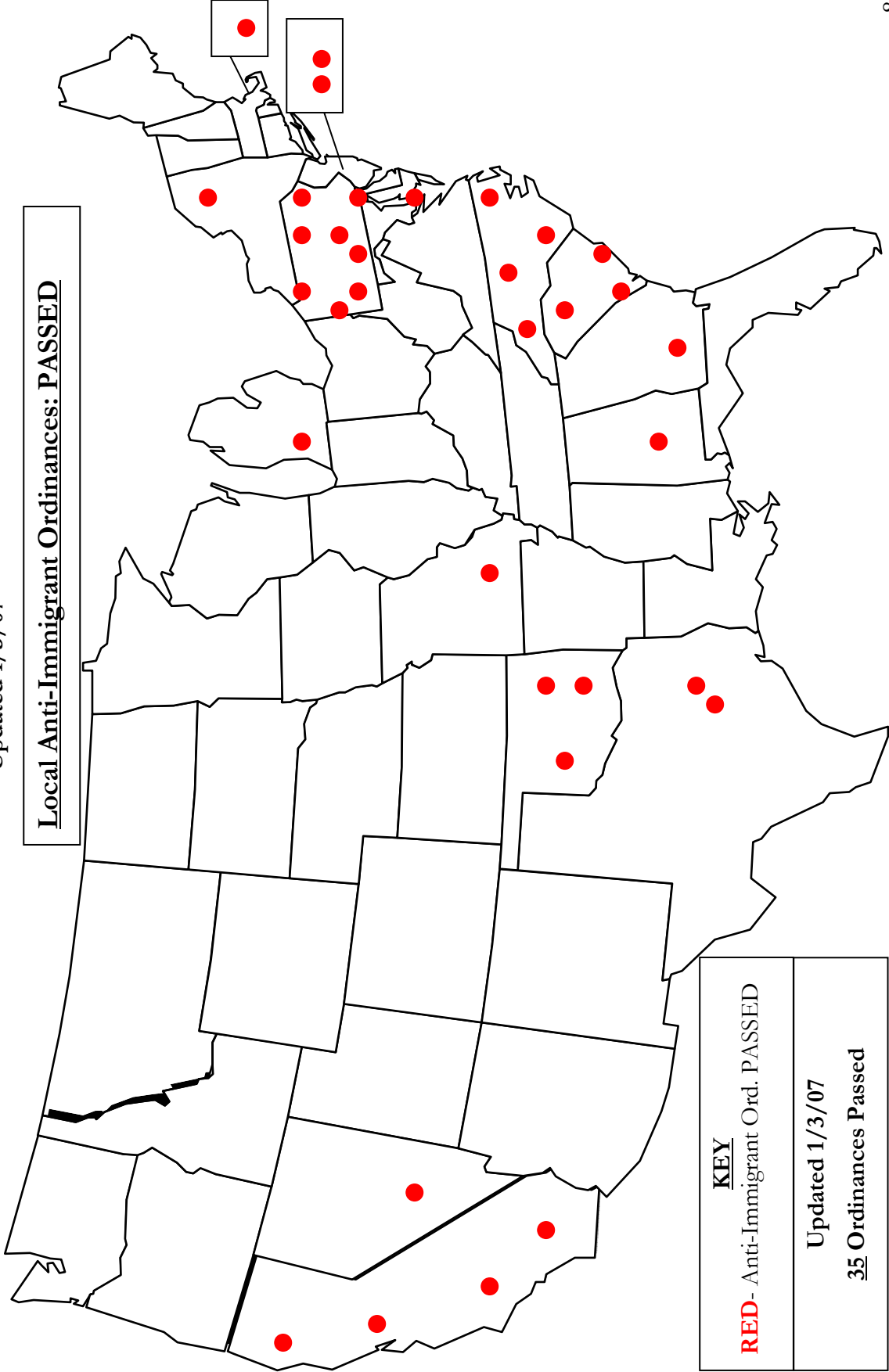
TOTAL PENDING/Under Construction: 35 (includes towns that are in the process of drafting legislation)

TOTAL: 105 (Since May 2006)



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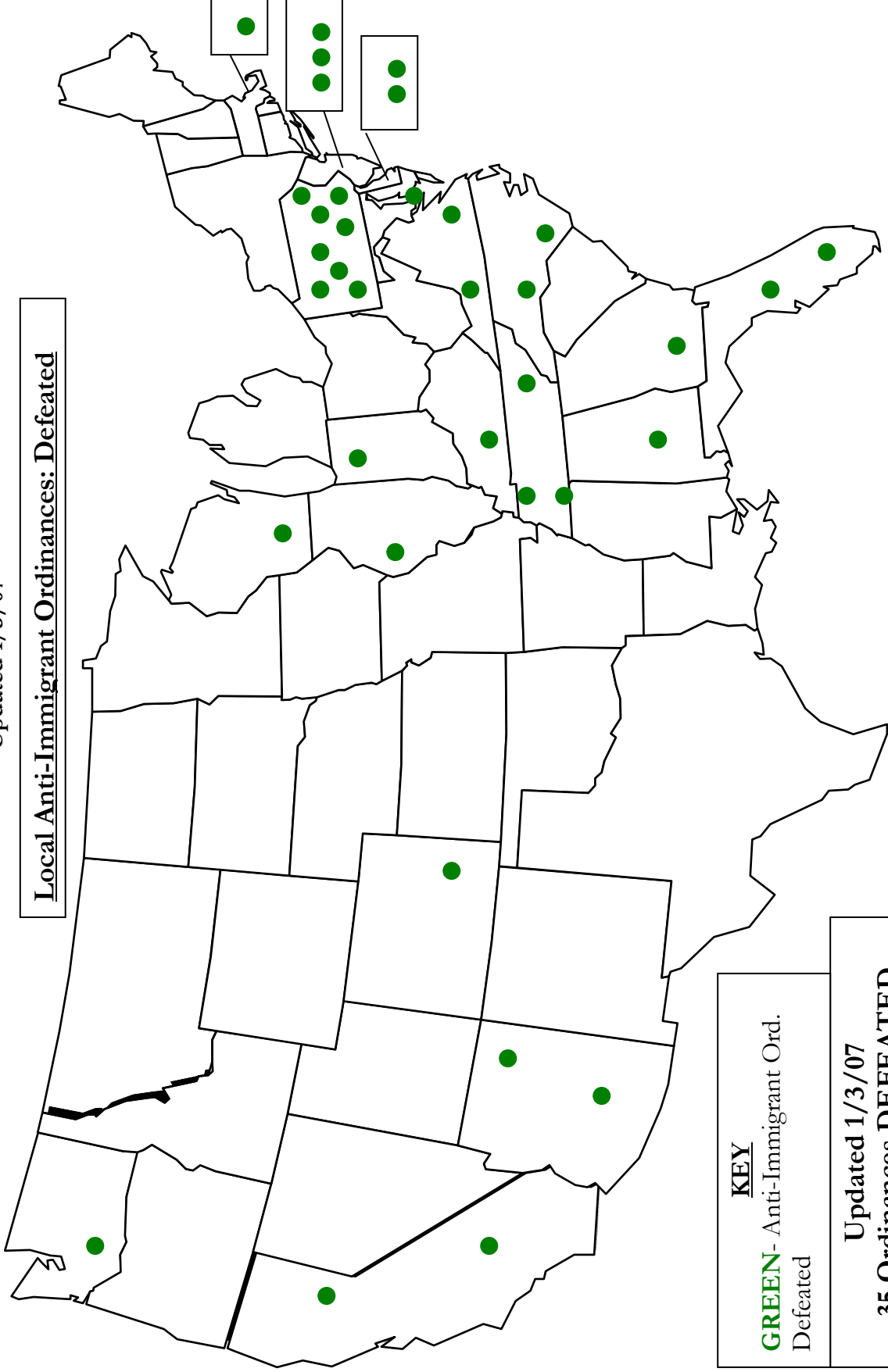
Local Anti-Immigrant Ordinances: PASSED





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Local Anti-Immigrant Ordinances: Defeated



KEY

GREEN- Anti-Immigrant Ord.
Defeated

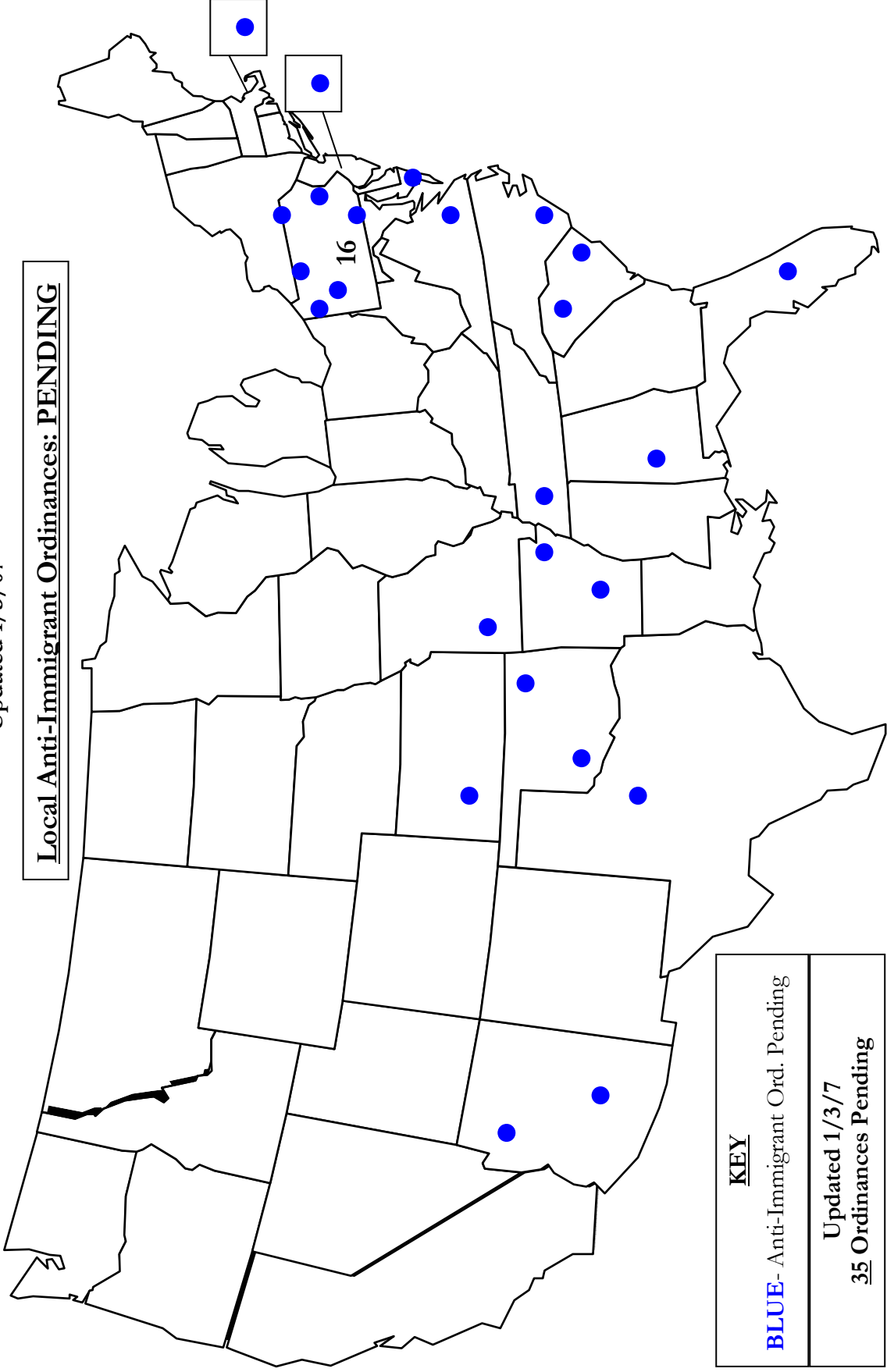
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35 Ordinances DEFEATED



Updated 1/3/07

Local Anti-Immigrant Ordinances: PENDING





Anatomy of a Local Campaign: Avon Park, FL

Background

On July 24th, the City Council of Avon Park, Florida, became one of the first cities to vote down one of a slew of anti-immigrant ordinances being pushed in locales across the country. The ordinance, known as the Illegal Immigration Relief Act, would have fined landlords \$1,000 for every tenant found to be an undocumented immigrant; denied city permits, contracts and grants to businesses that employed undocumented immigrants; and required all city documents to be in English only.

The Avon Park proposal can be traced back to the California-based anti-immigrant organization Save Our State. Save Our State founder, Joseph Turner, crafted and pushed for introduction of the so-called Illegal Immigration and Relief Act in San Bernardino, CA, in May of 2006. In the six months that have followed, over 75 towns and cities have followed suit, introducing variations of the unconstitutional, hateful, and immoral San Bernardino proposal.

One of the most contentious and watched of these proposed measures was in Avon Park, a city of about 9,000 in Florida's citrus belt. The ordinance was introduced by Mayor Tom Macklin on June 24th after hearing about the idea on a talk radio show.

When the Florida Immigration Coalition (FLIC) was contacted by immigrant-run small businesses that had caught wind of the proposed measure, they immediately sent an organizer to Avon Park to begin assessing the situation. With less than four weeks left before the initial introduction to the final reading and vote, the coalition had to act swiftly. Before taking direct action, the organizer and other FLIC staff analyzed the political climate and developed a strategy with members of the immigrant business community. Together, FLIC and immigrant-friendly businesses assembled a coalition of small businesses, churches, a union, non-profits and assorted individuals to fight the proposed ordinance. FLIC coordinated the local Avon Park coalition and linked it to an ad-hoc statewide advisory group that included legal service providers (FLS and FIAC) and the Catholic Church. They mounted a strong media strategy, reached out to the African-American community and other immigrants of color (Haitian & Jamaican communities) and area unions, and worked in tandem with legal service organizations and Florida law firms that were preparing a legal challenge.

Over 350 people attended the Council's final reading and vote on the ordinance. Dozens more waited outside, as the Council chambers were well over capacity. It was an amazing turnout in this small Florida town, which is nearly 60% white and 30% African-American, with 18% of the population identifying as Latino or Hispanic.

The final debate over the ordinance, which had been approved by a 3-2 vote on the initial reading, lasted over 5 hours as over 100 community members gave passionate testimony on the



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measure. In the end, Councilwoman Brenda Gray, who originally voted for the ordinance, changed her vote, resulting in a 3-2 defeat of the Illegal Immigration Relief Act.

In winning this fight, the Florida Immigration Coalition and their allies gave hope to dozens of communities across the country attempting to stage similar victories. What follows are some key lessons learned from their campaign in Avon Park. Also included here is a toolkit that provides organizations and activists with materials needed for planning a strategic resistance to such hateful anti-immigrant measures.

Key Organizing Steps

Step One: Conduct a Power Analysis

Before engaging in heavy organizing, the Florida Immigration Coalition (FLIC) and partner organizations in Avon Park conducted a power analysis to guide their strategy. Once their analysis was complete, they knew which levers to pull; they knew whom they were trying to influence.

“A central component of our analysis was to determine the most likely swing vote on the Avon Park City Council,” says Maria Rodriguez, Executive Director of the Florida Immigration Coalition. On the initial reading, the ordinance was supported by at 3-2 vote. The key finding of FLIC’s analysis was that their best opportunity for swinging a vote for the ordinance to win against it was Councilwoman Brenda Gray. Developing their strategy around a key swing vote allowed FLIC to make efficient use of limited resources, targeting their organizing toward a specific goal-- moving Gray from a “yea” to a “nay”.

Ms. Gray is the lone African-American member of the Avon Park City Council and is a former military officer. FLIC had already emerged as a leader in efforts to build alliances with African-American leaders and workers. They co-hosted a Town Hall meeting with the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and were seeking opportunities to build alliances on the shared experiences, challenges, and opportunities the two communities face.

Knowing that Councilwoman Gray was a key vote, FLIC reached out to their allies at the Service Employees International Union and asked for assistance in building support for their position with the Florida NAACP. FLIC also reached out to State Senator Tony Hill, a highly respected African-American leader who gained recognition for organizing sit-ins in resistance to state efforts to dismantle affirmative action laws in Florida. State Senator Hill personally called the NAACP chapter in Avon Park and put a call into Councilwoman Gray asking her to consider voting against the ordinance, which clearly threatened the civil rights of hardworking immigrant families.

For more details, see the *Power Analysis* section of the Toolkit.



Step Two: Building a Coalition

When the ordinance was introduced, FLIC did not have an affiliate in the Avon Park community. FLIC had to act quickly to assemble a broad coalition of immigrant-run businesses, churches, African-American leaders, legal service organizations, and assorted individuals. There was no immigrant rights infrastructure in Avon Park, so it was essential that FLIC play a role in getting all the stakeholders on the same page.

FLIC also tapped into the existing relationships that Florida Legal Services had with area agrobusiness to ensure they were mobilized to full capacity. Though these larger businesses did not participate in coalition activities, a relationship was built that facilitated the sharing of crucial information that guided the coalition's strategy and tactics.

For more details, see the *Coalition Building Section* of the Toolkit.

Step Three: Get Straight on Messaging and Messengers

Before developing a communications strategy, the first step was to clarify what audience they were trying to reach. The key question was: Who are we trying to influence with our public relations campaign?

- A specific politician or leader?
- People who have influence over a specific politician or leader?
- The general public?
- A specific segment within the general public?
- Some assortment of all of the above?

In developing your campaign, it's crucial that you clarify whom you are trying to influence and then use this information to guide your public relations strategy. In the case of Avon Park, the Florida Immigration Coalition was ultimately trying to influence Councilwoman Brenda Gray. Gray and her allies and supporters were the key audience for all media efforts. Because Gray is a former military officer and is African-American, many of the key messengers were African-American and/or of a military background. Other key messengers were clergy and small business owners.

Here are some of the messages that were most effective in Avon Park:

“This ordinance will lead to racial profiling and divisiveness, and has already created a lot of damage in the community.”

“This ordinance will lead to more discriminatory housing and employment practices in our community.”

“The ordinance is unenforceable.”



“The ordinance diverts scarce resource from city government.”

“This proposal comes at a high moral and financial cost.”

“This is not really a problem and this is clearly not a real solution.”

“This ordinance is not the solution.”

“We need comprehensive immigration reform.”

Ultimately, the Council members in Avon Park who voted against the ordinance seemed most affected by the arguments that this was not enforceable, that it would increase discrimination and create divisiveness. For Councilwoman Brenda Gray, the message that “this was not really a problem” had the most impact. She was taken by the fact that there was no evidence that immigrants caused the problems that the ordinance supposedly sought to fix. The following excerpt is from an article in the New York Times about the defeat of the ordinance:

Councilwoman Brenda Gray, who voted for the measure on first reading last month, voted against it on the final reading. Gray said she had changed her mind because she disagreed with the ordinance’s claim that illegal immigration “leads to higher crime rates, contributes to overcrowded classrooms and failing schools, subjects our hospitals to fiscal hardship and legal residents to substandard quality of care, and destroys our neighborhoods and diminishes our overall quality of life.”

“No one could give me any literature or anything that showed me that was true,” Ms. Gray said after the vote.¹

For more details see the *Framing Your Message to Win* section of the Toolkit.

Other Key Strategic Decisions

Keep it Local

FLIC, which is based in Miami with an office in the Tampa area, did not play up their involvement in the organizing effort. Though they were instrumental in developing the strategy and coordinating local coalition activities, FLIC remained in the background in terms of public action. FLIC was never mentioned in any press coverage surrounding the campaign. They sought to avoid a situation where anti-immigrant forces could paint the organizing as having been instigated by an outsider. In fact there was strong involvement from a large number of local leaders, but FLIC brought the organizing experience and expertise needed to defeat this hateful ordinance. The spokespeople for the campaign were from the Avon Park area. They included

¹ Goodnough, Abby. “Florida City Rejects Stringent Law on Migrants”. New York Times. 25 May 2006, natl. ed.



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unlikely suspects such as farmers, small business owners, as well as faith leaders and concerned individuals.

Numbers Count

FLIC and partner groups packed the city council chambers with over 350 pro-immigrant supporters for the final reading and vote on the proposed ordinance. This was an unheard number of people for a city council meeting in Avon Park, which boasts a population of 10,000. “It sent a strong message that people deeply cared about this and that the council’s action were being watched,” says Rodriguez.

Community Organizing + Legal Challenge = Winning Team

FLIC worked closely with Florida Legal Services, who coordinated the legal strategy by engaging a prestigious law firm, Carlton Fields. As a result of this collaboration, FLIC was able to keep coalition members informed about this component of the strategy. “We talked up the likelihood of a lawsuit as much as possible. It was a stick that helped strengthen our position,” says Rodriguez.

Moving to the Offensive

“In the end, there’s no magic bullet,” says Rodriguez. “We pursued a number of angles, leaving no stone unturned and the combination of them equaled a winning strategy.” FLIC and their affiliates are clearly doing something right. One week after defeating the Avon Park ordinance, FLIC moved on to Palm Bay to fight off a similar ordinance and succeeded! Along with their affiliates they defeated the ordinance by a vote of 3-2 on August 17. The number of anti-immigrant groups in Florida grew from 4 to 11 and the introduction of these two ordinances put FLIC on the defensive and forced them to divert from its summer plans. Now FLIC plans to move from the defensive to the offensive. They have set a goal of introducing 10 pro-immigrant measures in cities and towns across the state of Florida in 2007.



Conducting a Power Analysis

Effective campaigns start with an analysis of local city politicians and community power brokers. You must know *whose* support you need in order to win. The results of your analysis will drive your organizing strategy by being clear on whom you want to move, where you want to move them, and finding the right levers to pull to get them there.

A power analysis was one key to winning campaigns in Avon Park and Palm Bay, FL. In the case of Avon Park, the Florida Immigration Coalition (FLIC) assessed which council members were solidly in support of the ordinance and which were solidly against it. They then focused their strategy on securing the most likely swing vote on the council. Organizers also worked hard to build a coalition to shore up support from those who were solidly against the ordinance and to build support for immigrants throughout the community.

FLIC faced different council dynamics in Palm Bay, Fl. There, they had to target a broader cross section of the council because the entire council was in support of the ordinance. After doing a political analysis, they developed a strategy around the council people that they thought they could move to vote against the ordinance, and the ordinance was ultimately defeated. Even in the face of complete support for an ordinance, thoughtful strategies can swing votes and bring victory.

Who's Your Target?

- **Who has the most power to influence the decision?**

This could be a Mayor or County Commissioner that you feel is moveable on the issue. Or, in a potentially close vote, there may be a swing vote that you can focus on. In some cases there may be a certain non-elected community leader who may have sway over a number of key people. Figuring out who the power-brokers are will be essential to developing an effective strategy.

- **What is the make up of your town?**

What percentage of the population is for, against, or undecided about the ordinance?

What's the Self-Interest of Your Target?

Once you have determined whom you need to sway, it is time to figure out their self-interest.

- **What ambitions do they have?**

Is your target eyeing a run at a more powerful political position? How can you show them that taking an anti-immigrant stance will backfire and thwart their ambitions?

- **What connections or relationships are important to them?**

Where do they go to church? What social circles do they run in? Who are their key allies? The answers to such questions may provide clues as to where there might be pressure points.



- **Who has power over them?**

What individual or individuals have power over your target? This could be other elected officials, state party leaders, political donors, corporate leaders, and/or religious leaders. Find out who has power over your target and look for people who may be sympathetic to the rights of immigrants.

What Are The Values of Your Target?

What in their belief system might compel them to vote against the ordinance?

What arguments will they respond to?

- If they are a fiscal conservative, they may respond to the fact that this would be a costly program, requiring the city to hire more code enforcement employees, and create additional paperwork for area businesses.
- If they are a pragmatist, they may respond to the fact that this is an unenforceable proposal.
- If they are a person of faith, they may respond to the immoral underpinnings of such an ordinance.

Up Against the Wall?

You may be in a situation where you really have to sway the entire community to be able to stop the ordinance – (i.e. everyone on the council supports it and there is strong support in the community).

- A legal challenge will be important in strengthening your hand. You may need to seek the input of national legal organizations (see the *Useful Websites* section for links to national legal organizations).
- Your messaging campaign will need to be broad, helping the community rethink the issue.
- Still, there may be a power player who could help stop the ordinance. It may be an elected official, or potentially a very influential business leader who, if compelled, could stop the ordinance from coming to a vote.

Once you have answered the questions above and you feel that you are clear on precisely whom you are trying to influence and how, it's time to move to the *Framing Your Message to Win* section of this Toolkit.



Building Your Coalition

Why a Coalition?

In a campaign to fight-off an anti-immigrant ordinance or to push a pro-immigrant ordinance you will need a broad coalition of interests in order to succeed. A coalition begins as a coming together of diverse organizations and interests with the goal of orchestrating a specific campaign. A coalition can help you build the power needed to win.

Any coalition is born out of the shared self-interest of its members, and it is the job of everyone within the coalition, particularly the lead organizers, to ensure that coalition members achieve their self-interest through the campaign.

Who Should Be In Your Coalition?

Here are some of the characteristics you should look for in potential coalition members:

- **Leaders with a following** - A leader is not simply a charismatic personality who speaks well in public. A leader is someone who has a following. When you are pulling together a coalition you are not just looking for good, smart people, but you will need to have people that have power. So, look for leaders that have followers, and hopefully a lot of followers. For example, the clergy, heads of community organizations, and business leaders with a base of followers will make good coalition members and will have the ability to turn out large numbers of people when needed. When thinking this through, consider the question, “Who do these people represent?” because that is the exact question that politicians and the media will be asking when they speak on the issue of immigrant rights.
- **Leaders who play well with others** – While you don’t have to agree with everybody about everything, be wary of stakeholders who have the potential to tear a coalition apart or completely dominate decision-making. While you are seeking to be inclusive as possible, don’t be inclusive to a fault by letting the coalition fall apart. Democracy is not a spectator sport and as the person pulling the coalition together you have to make sure that all coalition members are getting their needs met enough to stay at the table and no one person is dominating.

Laying the Groundwork

- **Form the core** - Look for a few key allies to pull together to form the core of the coalition. You are looking for folks that have a following, have credibility in the community, are trustworthy, and are easy to work with. They will be the nucleus of your coalition.



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- **Research lesser known groups** - Determine which groups you think might meet the above criteria, but you do not know much about. Then spend a little time doing more research on them. This research could be done on the internet, but it also makes sense to ask around and get the opinion of people you trust.
- **Pull together your first meeting** - After you have pulled your core together and created a list of people to pull into the coalition, look to pull together the first coalition meeting. It often helps to have one-on-one meetings with these folks before the first coalition meeting so you have as many folks on the same page when everybody is in a room together for the first time. The smoother you can make things go in the beginning, the better.
- **Develop a simple decision making process** - Do everything you can to NOT get bogged down in nitty-gritty governance or by-law questions. That being said, you may want to nail down a few ground rules at the first meeting. A brief discussion about this early on about decision-making, roles, and responsibilities will provide some clarity for folks from the beginning. Here are a few things to think through:
 - It may also make sense to appoint a point-person who is responsible for some of the key communications and operations. This needs to be someone who is diplomatic and is trusted by coalition members.
 - In terms of voting on a decision, it is important to make sure that each organization has only one vote. Sometimes in loose coalitions, this is not made clear and as a result some organizations who bring a lot of people to meetings can dominate the decision-making process. It may be necessary to form an Executive Committee that includes one representative from each coalition member that votes on key decisions. If your campaign is under the gun for the time being, and folks seem to be working well together, you may be able to skip this step for the time being.
 - Make sure everyone feels like that they have a role in the coalition or they will not stay engaged. It could be as simple as conducting some research, taking notes, or hosting a meeting. People are going to stay at the table if they are getting their self-interests met and feel that they are contributing.
- **Focus on the Issue**- When all is said and done, stay focused on the issue that brought you together. This is what bonds you as a group, not the need to engage in long governance and process questions. Acting together is what makes organizing powerful, not getting hung up on governance and process questions. Always keep the group centered on acting to defend the rights as immigrants and you will keep the coalition moving in the right direction.



Maintaining an Effective Coalition

- **Be Clear on Your Concrete Goals** - Throughout a campaign, members may have different expectations for the concrete outcomes of the fight- it is important that all members agree to simple, realistic, and concrete outcomes (i.e. the rejection of a specific ordinance) that everyone in the coalition can commit to.
- **Maintain Clear, Consistent Communication** - Open, honest, and frequent communication is the key to a successful coalition. You will need to make sure that all members are kept in the loop on decisions and strategizing.
- **Make your presence known** - It is important to ensure that the media and political players are aware of the strength of your coalition and the broad reach of your base. You will want to make sure that the coalition is front and center within the media, as well as in any council meetings and negotiations on legislation.
- **Share the credit** - Ensure that after any victories, big and small, credit is shared among all coalition members. There are several battles in a campaign and you need to allow all members to benefit from campaign successes.



Framing Your Message to Win

An essential ingredient of a winning campaign is a successful messaging strategy. What follows are some guiding questions and model messages to consider as you develop your media and messaging campaign. Campaigns in Tennessee, Florida, South Carolina, and Illinois all began their work by deciding who their target audience was and developed a “frame” for the story that would touch their target audience. They then created messaging points that supported that story, and shared them with fellow-organizers and the press. The guiding questions below are a helpful way to decide which frame will be most effective in your campaign.

Guiding Questions:

- 1) At what stage in the local legislative process is the ordinance? Under discussion, introduced, pending, initial reading, final reading, etc.
- 2) Who has the power to influence the next step in the process? Who should be your key target audience?
 - A Specific Councilperson or elected official?
 - The General Public?
 - A specific Interest Group (business, faith, agriculture, etc.)?
- 3) What messages is the opposition using to push the ordinance? How can you respond directly to those points?
- 4) What messages are going to reach your target audience? And who is the most effective person/group to deliver that message (i.e. faith leader, landlord, immigrant)?
- 5) How can you reframe the message of the opposition? For example, in Tennessee the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition renamed the local housing ordinances the “Illegal Landlords Ordinances”. This move effectively shifted the center of the debate and pushed their message in a succinct and powerful way.

Specific Frames You Can Use

Frame – This Ordinance is not a Fix for a Broken Immigration System

(This frame is helpful in targeting a council that says it is pushing the ordinance to “send a message” to the federal government on immigration reform.)

Our immigration system is broken, and the federal government has failed to take leadership in solving the problem. This ordinance is not the answer; comprehensive immigration reform is.

If we want immigration reform, we must get it at the federal level. The city council should send a letter to federal officials, not pass unconstitutional ordinances.



This ordinance is unconstitutional. Immigration is under the jurisdiction of the federal government, not local city councils. No ordinance has won a legal challenge yet.

Frame – This Ordinance is Discriminatory and Will Create a Climate of Fear and Distrust

(This frame can be helpful in places where residents can band together and fight against racial profiling and for the values of the community.)

The only way to enforce this ordinance is by profiling suspects by race, and criminalizing legal residents of our community.

This ordinance will make it harder for all Hispanic people to find housing and jobs.

This ordinance supports a massive surge in discriminatory housing and employment practices.

Legal immigrants and citizens with brown skin will bear the brunt of scrutiny under this ordinance.

This ordinance is about whether this community welcomes diversity or not.

Frame – This Ordinance is Costly and Unenforceable

(This is an effective message for appealing to fiscal conservatives as well as those that might see the costs of this ordinance resulting in cuts in other programs.)

The costs associated with trying to administer this unenforceable ordinance will divert city resources from city services.

If this passes, city government will have to raise taxes to pay for new code enforcement employees, additional paperwork costs, and legal services to fight off likely constitutional challenges.

The town does not have the financial and administrative means to enforce this ordinance.

There is no federal registry to verify the legal status of residents Social Security or resident documents.



Frame – This is a Non-Solution to a Non-Problem

(This frame is helpful in a town that does not have a large immigration population OR where immigration is clearly NOT linked to problems in the town.)

There is no research to back the claims against immigrants in this ordinance. There is no evidence that immigration is a problem in our town. “Good leaders do not lead by anecdotal evidence.”

Politicians are scape-goating immigrants (i.e. blaming them for larger problems in our town).

This is not a preventative measure; this is a tool of intimidation that will hurt legal residents of our community.

Migrants are actually an asset to our community through their hard work and commitment to our town.

Frame - Defeating this Ordinance Will Send the Right Message

(This is effective in targeting councils that say they are using this ordinance to “send a message” and to parts of the population who value an open and diverse community.)

By defeating this ordinance, we will be supporting a welcoming, inclusive, and just community.

We will send a message to the federal government that immigration reform is and should be their top priority.

Frame - Faith and Morals

(This is an important message in coalitions with local faith leaders, as well as target audiences of faith.)

All faith traditions tell us that we must treat immigrants with justice.

The faith leadership of our communities stands together at this critical moment to denounce bad immigration policies that are incompatible with the teachings of faiths, and to pray that compassion is shown.

This vote is not a vote about immigration, but rather a vote about the type of community we want to be: One that opens our doors to newcomers or one that closes our doors to newcomers. The choice is ours.



Frame - This Ordinance Will Harm Valued Local Businesses and/or Landlords

(This is another important message for coalitions with local businesses and landlords.)

These ordinances cause an exodus of valued members of our community and hurt area businesses, landlords, and agriculture.

In Hazleton, Riverside, and other towns, legal residents have left the community. What will happen to businesses who lose workers, and landlords who lose legal tenants?

Frame - An English-Only Ordinance is Unnecessary and Ineffective

92 percent of the US population speaks English well, according to the last census.

We can all agree that learning English is valuable, and an overwhelming majority of immigrants agree that learning English and teaching it to their children is very important.

An English-Only ordinance does NOTHING to help immigrants learn English.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, immigrants today are actually learning English as quickly as or quicker than previous waves of immigration, but their efforts are hampered by insufficient language instruction in local schools.

This ordinance will hurt the government's ability to effectively communicate with residents, and it leaves us all open to public health and safety problems.

(Includes excerpts from National Council of La Raza's Talking Points on English-Only Ordinances)

For more information on talking points and legal messaging strategies please see the *Useful Websites* section of the Toolkit.



Strategies for Action!

Through conversations with residents who have fought off anti-immigrant ordinances in their own towns, we have gathered tips on how to execute successful actions. One thing has become clear: These ordinances can only be fought with a strategic show of force from residents opposed to the law in a broad coalition representing both local interests and legal advocates. Usually the ordinances are passed within a month or two of drafting, thus leaving organizers little time to act.

Once you have conducted a power analysis to determine the audience for your efforts, it is important to choose actions that will work well for the dynamics of your audience. You can't convince everyone in your town to oppose the ordinance, but you can influence key players to defeat the law. In many towns where these ordinances have passed, there has been little to no public opposition to the law. In those areas, supporters of the ordinance have sent in letters, called councilmen, and gathered at town hall meetings to show their support. It is crucial that we out-organize them.

Before an Ordinance Has Been Drafted

Most politicians choose to discuss the ordinance to gauge public opinion before they draft the ordinance. If you hear that an ordinance is under consideration in your town, you do not need to wait until it is drafted to act. You can begin to strategize immediately.

- **Support Political Allies**- Councilmen and mayors can't fight these ordinances if they don't have the support of residents. It is important to identify who on the council *could* be against the ordinance, meet with them, and publicly show your support for them early on.
- **Testify before Introduced**- Forty Fort, PA - Residents warned the city council of the economic damage and social strife that these ordinances can bring. In Forty Fort, the fear of the legal and economic repercussions of such a bill led to it being tabled.
- **Get out of the Gate Quick**- Florida - The Florida Immigration Coalition wasted no time in sending an organizer to Avon Park to begin strategizing with local partners on how to work in coalition and how best to fight the ordinance. That timing was essential to their success.
- **Use the Press**- Rogers, AR - news of the ordinance came through local newspapers. By writing letters to the editor and op-ed pieces in advance of the ordinances, residents were able to sway public opinion away from the mayor, and raise important opposition to the ordinance.
- **Connect with Legal Advocates Early**- Beaufort, SC - Organizers worked successfully alongside local attorneys and major law firms to let the city council know that there would be legal ramifications if an ordinance was passed.
- **Start Strategizing Pro-Immigrant Legislation**- Now is a good time to begin strategizing; using pro-immigrant ordinances to shift the debate in your town (See the *Immigrant Friendly Organizing Handles* section of this toolkit.)



While the Ordinance is in Reading

Once an ordinance has been drafted, you may have only a few weeks to organize opposition before an ordinance goes to a vote:

- **Public Display of Opposition**- Beaufort, SC - Organizers, including the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, brought together more than 250 people to demonstrate at the final reading and vote of the ordinance. They had 10 people prepped to speak before the council armed with the essential messaging points, and they had others ready to speak if needed.
- **Use Technology to Connect**- Nashville, TN - The Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition used their existing website to effectively communicate with coalition members. They maintained weekly updates to inform residents of the progress of the debate and organize diverse groups that are opposed to the ordinance. TIRRC succeeded in defeating all three ordinances in Nashville!
- **Pivot to Pro-Immigration Legislation**- Allentown, PA - Organizers used a pivoting method to shift the center of the debate around the ordinance. The initial debate centered on the negative impact of immigration. Organizers banded together and proposed a pro-immigration ordinance (modeled on one from Boston, MA). This opened the door to shifting the debate to the positive aspects of immigration, and it showed that there was united support for a pro-immigration ordinance. Ultimately, the anti-immigrant ordinance was tabled.
- **Re-center the Debate on the Federal Government**- Asheville, NC - Organizers saw that councilmen were pushing the ordinance in order to “send a message to the federal government” that they wanted immigration reform. In light of this, they succeeded in tabling the ordinance and had the council write a letter to their federal representatives urging them to support CIR. This is a positive “bait and switch” technique that effectively re-centers the debate where it should be on the federal government.
- **Reframe the Debate**- Nashville, TN - TIRRC renamed the housing ordinance the “Illegal Landlord Bill”. By using this new name consistently, the title entered the public debate and successfully characterized the ordinance in a negative light. The ordinance was eventually tabled.



If the Ordinance Passes

- **Keep up the Legal Pressure**- In Hazelton, PA; Riverside, NJ; Valley Park, MO; and Escondido, CA, coalitions of residents have brought effective legal challenges against the ordinances. These ordinances are essentially unconstitutional, and legal challenges will be the last defense against them spreading. It is important for advocates across the country to watch these towns and keep residents informed of legal development, as the legal outcomes may decide if these ordinances can spread further.
- **Petition to Repeal**- Farmer's Branch, TX - An anti-immigrant ordinance has recently passed. Fortunately the town has a clause according to which residents can repeal an ordinance with a petition comprising 5% of the registered voters in the town. A local coalition has begun such a petition.
- **Keep Track of the Impact**- In order to fight these ordinances we need comprehensive information on the negative economic and social impact of the laws. You can be among the first to provide concrete evidence that these ordinances are harmful, by keeping track of how the ordinance affects the community (i.e. exodus of residents, closing of businesses, cost of enforcement and legal battles to taxpayers, etc.).



Immigrant Friendly Organizing Handles

From El Paso, TX, to Allentown, PA, to Carpentersville, IL, organizers are turning a negative situation into a source of positive change by working to pass pro-immigrant resolutions and ordinances in opposition to anti-immigrant ordinances. Introducing a pro-immigrant resolution or ordinance* measure in the face of anti-immigrant ordinances can change the debate in a town and swing voters away from anti-immigrant ordinances. It can also rally pro-immigrant constituents around a positive goal with a distinct outcome, and it strengthens the support of pro-immigrant constituents for other bills to be introduced at the local, state, and federal level.

Pro-immigrant resolutions not only are a tool against anti-immigrant ordinances, but they also accomplish three important goals. First, they provide a positive campaign for people to work on, helping develop a strong local coalition. Second, they are a means to get positive stories about the contributions of immigrants into public discourse. Third, they lay the groundwork for a broader immigrant rights agenda in your state or region.

In order to take action, bring your coalition together to decide which immigrant friendly resolution or ordinance best fits the make-up of your town. We have included a summary of the current types of immigrant friendly ordinances, where they have been passed, and examples of each in the documents section of this toolkit.

Statutory – Changing Local Practices to Protect Immigrants

- Sanctuary Ordinance – Seeks to protect immigrants and their families by establishing checks on the right of law enforcement and local government agencies to verify the legal status of individuals. These ordinances often include statements on the benefits of immigrants to the community and the rights of immigrants. *See Seattle, WA*
- Racial Profiling - Prohibits the use of race in the sole determinant in the investigation of an alleged crime.

Proclamation – Officials Statements Concerning the Treatment of Immigrants

- Pro-Immigrant Statement – Non-binding proclamations that a city is a safe-haven for immigrants. While these resolutions suggest that immigrants are safe from persecution and threats in the city, they make no official change to law enforcement or government functions.
- Welcoming Proclamation - States that a town openly welcomes and supports the growth of immigrant communities in their region. Again, these towns are non-binding and do not prescribe particular governmental actions. *See San Francisco, CA*

Non-binding – Resolutions that Support Immigrant Friendly Efforts

- Support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform – General statement in support of just migration federal legislation and the need for federal reform. Some resolutions of



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this type give specific suggestions for border security, or paths to resident status for citizenship, but they do not refer to a specific legislative proposal. *See Boston, MA; El Paso, TX*

- Statement Regarding Specific Piece of Federal Legislation - Declares support for or rejection of specific federal legislation. In early 2006, there was significant increase in this type of resolution in light of various bills under consideration in the U.S. House and Senate. *See Columbus, OH*

For examples of these ordinances, please see the attached document
Examples of Local Pro-Immigrant Resolutions.

For a more complete listing of pro-immigrant resolutions and texts visit
http://www.cirnnow.org/content/en/proimmigrant_resolutions.htm

* There is a difference between resolution and ordinance. Resolution is a suggestion or statement by the council that does not the change legal codes of a town, while an ordinance directly changes laws. A proclamation is a form of resolution announcing the beliefs of a city council, elected official, or county commissioner.



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Useful Websites

Organizing Tools for Your Campaign

FLIC - <http://www.fiacfla.org/coalition.php>

TIRCC - Anti-Ordinance Coalition Website - <http://www.tnimmigrant.org/>

City-Data - Helps you collect information on population and other stats in your town-
<http://www.city-data.com/>

CIR NOW - Useful list of immigrant friendly ordinances
http://www.cirnow.org/content/en/proimmigrant_resolutions.htm

MALDEF - Legal-focused press kit - <http://www.maldef.org/publications/index.cfm>

NIF - Messaging-focused toolkit with very useful resources and links-
<http://www.immigrationforum.org/documents/CRB/LocalOrdinanceToolkit.pdf>

General Information

CCC - The Center for Community Change- <http://www.communitychange.org>

ACLU - Immigrant's Rights Project - <http://www.aclu.org/immigrants/index.html>

NCLR - National Council of La Raza (NCLR) - <http://nclr.org>
Contact: Flavia Jimenez (fjimenez@nclr.org)

NILC - National Immigration Law Center - <http://www.nilc.org/>

PRLDEF - Links to tracking ordinances and news updates- <http://www.prldef.org/>
Contact John Garcia (john_garcia@prldef.org)

Southern Poverty Law Center - Report on Anti-Immigrant and Hate Groups in the US -
<http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/intrep.jsp?iid=38>

Building Democracy Initiative - Report tracking nativist groups in the US -
http://www.buildingdemocracy.org/index.php?option=com_jmr_fmas&id=1&Itemid=91

Anti-immigrant sites

ALIPAC - Anti-immigrant discussion boards, tracking of ordinances -
<http://www.alipac.us/index.php>

Save Our State - <http://www.saveourstate.org/>

Minuteman Project - <http://www.minutemanproject.com/>



Guide for Letters, Op-Eds and Press Statements

Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor are used to respond to something that appeared in the paper, like correcting an inaccuracy, pointing out a missing fact, commenting about the slant of a story, or responding to criticism.

When writing a letter to the editor, you should refer to a specific news article or editorial that was printed in the newspaper where you are sending your letter.

There are three things to keep in mind:

1. Keep it short –two to three paragraphs, or 100 words
2. Focus on facts, not criticizing the source
3. Send letter quickly –preferably the same day

The more personalized, briefer, and timely the letter, the better chance you have of getting it printed.

Check with your newspaper on the best way to submit letters to the editor. Usually you can submit letters by e-mail, fax or by mail. Many newspapers' e-mail address for letter submissions is: letters@nameofpaper.com. Again, check with your local paper.

This website is a comprehensive list of newspapers by state:
<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/usstate/usatable.htm>

Sample Letter to the Editor in Riverside, NJ

Re: “A tough line on immigrants”, July 26-

Lee Llambelis of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund mentioned that the proposal in Riverside is “a national movement with copycat legislation.”

This growing trend in cities across Pennsylvania of “copycat” legislation needs to come to a halt. Some of the proposals have not passed the city council, but the fact that they have even a few supporters illustrates how some people undervalue the work and lives of immigrants. Both



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documented and undocumented immigrants are essential part to the workforce and important community members. It is imperative that the public understands the negative impacts of anti-immigration legislation on our friends, co-workers, and neighbors. “Hard line” actions such as the proposal in Riverside only create rifts between groups of people and do not provide solutions to the existing immigration system.

These harsh proposals are not limited to cities in Pennsylvania; similar ones introduced in other states are also creating great controversy and fractious debate. City council members in Avon Park, FL heroically rejected their city’s anti-immigrant proposal on Monday. We need to continue to reject rigorous and unworkable regulations and start recognizing the contributions of the immigrant community through a comprehensive immigration reform.

Sample Letter to the Editor in Beaufort, SC

To the editor

Your recent article (Illegals imperil academy's funding) is inconsistent reasoning that seeks to unfairly blame immigrants for something that isn’t even happening.

The headline isn’t supported by the story. The story details in several places that the staff at the school fear that the increase in immigrants will peril the placement rate. But with 55% of the students now Hispanic, the placement rate last year was an excellent 96%. Since the staff themselves admit they don’t know who is undocumented, is it possible that many of those that got placed are undocumented?

It is misguided reasoning such as this that fuels proposals such as Beaufort County’s Illegal Immigration Relief Ordinance. A town or village has problems with business licenses or with school funds or with crime, and local politicians want to take the easy way out by pointing to the most defenseless population – recent immigrants.

For hundreds of years, immigrants have come to this country in search of the American dream. They seek the dream of fairness, of welcome and the hope that if they work hard they will get a chance at a good life. More than several studies – by non-partisan governmental groups - have shown that immigrants are a positive economic and social force in the communities they live in. They come from countries that value education, that value families and that value democracy.

I am from out of town. But in four days here, I have found that this is the essence of the people I have met in Beaufort County. They are decent, hard working, welcoming people. It seems like the longtime residents of Beaufort County and the recent immigrants to this area are the kind of neighbors who could easily work together to solve any problem.

John Garcia
Coordinator
Latino Justice Project
PRLDEF



Op-Eds

WHAT: Op-eds (or opeds) officially stand for “opposite the editorial page”. That’s where they are placed. Op-eds are commentaries that provide an opportunity to frame an issue from your point of view.

WHY: Op-eds can: influence how an issue is covered; frame the policy dialog around an issue; influence readers and pressure policymakers; and, help position an organization and thereby increase its visibility and effectiveness. Releasing an op-ed in advance of a news event can offer context for the coverage or reframe an issue.

HOW:

Step # 1

Define your audience and goal

Is the audience policy makers, the general public, or your constituents?

Is the goal: to heighten interest in an event you are staging and set the frame for coverage; to have your voice raised in the policy debate; or, to increase coverage for an issue and offer the correct spin?

Step #2

Identify the media outlet that reaches your audience

Is it the major regional newspaper read by both policymakers and local voters?

Is it a national newspaper (the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post*) in order to affect the national debate?

Is it a constituent or ally-focused newspaper (for example, African American, Asian, labor, Latino or progressive press)?

Step # 3

Determine your message

Present your organization’s unique contribution to the policy debate. Op-ed page editors seek fresh ways of looking at issues. Therefore you have to offer a new perspective, an original argument about an issue; or, a topic which has not been covered.

It helps to be creative with your timing. For instance, play up information from a newly released report, or introduce a breaking story. (Many newspapers like their front page stories to become the fodder for op-eds in the days following).

Step #4

Read the other op-eds to become familiar with that newspaper’s style and approach.



Step #5

Identify the best author

While the executive director or your board chair might actually write the op-ed, finding the best “name” to “sign” it is critical to maximizing the op-ed’s impact. The media are most receptive to unexpected voices, very prominent people, or experts. While a prominent national figure is attractive, for local newspapers make sure the op-ed is “localized” by having a local slant on the issue, using local experts, or by using local statistics. The author can be a “real person,” someone who is directly impacted by the policy you’re writing about. For example, an op-ed by a University president about the passage importance of the Dream Act offers a credible voice rarely heard in the pages of major newspapers.

Step #6

Test the Waters

If you have a good, personal relationship with the op-ed editor, you can test whether there is interest in an op-ed by emailing a paragraph describing your approach. Any feedback you get allows you to tailor your op-ed in a way that better assures publication.

Step 7

Write the op-ed

- Most op-eds range from 500 to 750 words, depending on the newspaper. A good website to get specifications for placing op-eds at the top 100 daily papers in the country can be found at www.ccmc.org/oped.htm
- The article should include a suggested headline, a by-line (signers’ names), and a two-sentence identification of the author(s). There should be no more than two authors. It is helpful to include any biographical information, including where they live and any relevant experience. For example, you might write, “Mary Jones is a mother of three who lives in Topeka, Kansas who has worked for ten years as the President ofUniversity.”
- Before drafting the op-ed it might be helpful to imagine your audience. If you had a chance to talk with them directly, how would you present your argument?
- Your opening two sentences should grab people. Your opening could:
 - Be a brief story illustrating how the issue affects an individual or a group of people, putting a human face on your topic.
 - Repeat a statement made by a major policymaker you disagree with.
 - Be a statement about a policy under debate or a stunning fact.
- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short.
- Avoid technical phrases or jargon.
- The article should provoke discussion as well as inform.
- Back up assertions with facts.
- Stay focused.



Step # 8

Submit your op-ed

The major national newspapers (*LA Times*, *NY Times*, *Washington Post*) demand exclusivity (meaning that you haven't submitted the same material to other newspapers); and some local newspapers do too – so check. Many newspapers only require exclusivity within a certain distance of their market area. For these, you can sometimes draft one op-ed for many regional dailies; but, for each you should regionalize the “lead” (the opening paragraph) by focusing on a local statistic or situation and sprinkle additional facts and local stories in the op-ed. Be careful about sending an op-ed that may seem to ‘canned’ for fear of Editors from regions close by picking up on it. There is an editor listserv and editors to share op-eds if they think they got something that was massed produced.

The most effective way to submit an op-ed is to deliver it at an editorial board meeting and ask that they consider it. Find out who to follow-up with because op-ed editors get hundreds daily making it is easy for yours to get “lost in the sauce.”

If you submit an op-ed by mail identify who to send it to by calling and asking for the name (and correct spelling) of the op-ed editor. The best method is to email and op-ed.

Follow-up with a call (even if you delivered the op-ed at the editorial board meeting). On the call with the editor make the case for “diversifying the voices in the policy debate” by running your op-ed. (If necessary state your case through voicemail or email.) Sometimes you may have to push a little to get your op-ed published.

Have a back up. If it doesn't get into the major daily, is there an alternative newspaper, a weekly or even newsletter you can publish it in?

Step # 9

Show Off Your op-ed

Remember to save your published op-ed so that you can send it to founders and policymakers, and place it in your press kit.



Press Statements

A press statement is a brief statement from your organization or a spokesperson commenting on a breaking development. You obviously have no what, when, where and why to include but it should indicate what event or statement you are responding to. The statement should be concise, articulate and ideally have some catchy phrasing that is compelling, short and quotable. Make sure your heading doesn't just say Joan Johns, executive director of Partnership for Successful Families responds to President Bush's tax cuts. Unless the media is waiting with bated breath to hear what Johan Johns has to say that will not catch much attention. A better headline might be "Military families decry exclusion from Bush Administration child tax credit" with a subhead that says *Statement by Partnership for Successful Families Executive Director.*

Sample Press Statement for Carpentersville, IL

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

36 S. Wabash, suite 1425 · Chicago, IL 60603 · 312.332.7360 voice · 312.332.7044 fax · www.icirr.org

For Immediate Release - Statement

October 3, 2006

For more information contact:

Catherine Salgado, 312.332.7360 ext 35

Kristin Kumpf, 773.540.7275



Statement of Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights Opposing Carpentersville Illegal Alien Immigration Relief Act Ordinance

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, an organization representing more than 100 member organizations throughout our state, strongly urges the Carpentersville Village Board of Trustees to reject this ill-advised and insulting proposal.

People on all sides of the immigration debate agree that immigration should be a safe, orderly, and legal process for people who want to come to the US to rejoin relatives, find work, and seek better futures. Unfortunately, our immigration system is broken, and the federal government has failed to take leadership in solving the problem. Local communities are left to handle the effects of our broken system.

The proposed ordinance, however, is precisely the wrong approach to our immigration problem. This ordinance is based on hatred. It smears all undocumented immigrants as criminals, nuisances, and burdens to society. It is willfully blind to the hard work that undocumented immigrants perform, and the contributions they make to our community when given the opportunity--\$5.45 billion to the Chicago region's economy each year. Instead of welcoming



these immigrants and their families as neighbors and members of the community, it raises further barriers and pushes them away.

In addition, this ordinance would be costly and unworkable. It would encourage racial profiling, as employers and landlords would indiscriminately turn away Latinos (who make up 40% of Carpentersville residents) and anyone else who looks “foreign,” including many US citizens and legal immigrants. The only way to avoid such wholesale discrimination would be for the village to devote massive resources to educating employers, landlords, police officers, and village offices on the finer points of immigration law so they will all know who is legal and who is not. But immigration law is complex and always changing. Is the village willing to spend this kind of money and effort to keep up with these laws and run such training and outreach? How would landlords, police, and others be expected to handle mixed-status families, in which an undocumented immigrant lives with a US citizen or legal immigrant spouse or children? And wouldn't the ordinance only encourage the undocumented to get fake documents?

The ordinance would also create a climate of fear and distrust among immigrant and Latino communities. Immigrants would become further isolated, afraid to seek help from the police, the fire department, hospitals, and schools for fear of being questioned about their immigration status and reported to immigration authorities. The English-only provisions of the ordinance would raise another barrier, preventing immigrants from effectively communicating with the police and other village offices. (The ordinance, incidentally, makes no provisions for teaching English.) Immigrants would thus become easy targets for all manner of crime and abuse. All of this would be a major blow to public safety.

This ordinance offers no real solutions to our broken immigration system. It will not stop undocumented immigration. It will only drive people away or underground. We need real solutions, solutions that keep families united, that do not instill fear in the community, that bring hardworking individuals into the law rather than pushing them away, and that are based on hard facts and not suppositions of individuals based on where they come from.

We therefore urge the board to reject this ordinance. Defeating this ordinance will send the right message to everyone in the community: a message that newcomers are welcome, should feel safe in our neighborhoods, and should be able to make the most of their talents and energy to build better futures for themselves, their families, and our entire community.

10/03/06 - Statement of Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights Opposing Carpentersville Illegal Alien Immigration Relief Act Ordinance

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