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SEIU STATEMENT ON THE GUTIERREZ/FLAKE STRIVE ACT BY EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT ELISEO MEDINA

WASHINGTON, DC – Today Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Executive Vice President Eliseo Medina issued the following statement on the introduction of the Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy (STRIVE) Act of 2007 – which was introduced by Congressmen Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ):

“Today’s introduction of the STRIVE Act of 2007 finally gets the ball rolling on the kind of comprehensive immigration reform that Americans have long been asking Congress to act on.

From the outset, it appears that Representatives Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) have included the elements we need to restore order and create a fair, workable immigration system. In particular, they have addressed the need for smart enforcement strategies at the border and in the workplace, a path to earned citizenship, and reunification of families. They have also laid the framework for a more humane worker visa program that will help fill a growing pool of available jobs and protect the rights of all American workers.

However, the devil is in the details. We want comprehensive immigration reform passed this year, but the right legislation will not cut corners.

Any provision that requires 12 million immigrants to return home before adjusting their status is bad policy. Not only is this “touch back” provision impractical, it fails to account for the resulting consequence to communities, businesses, and families. In the coming days, SEIU will study the STRIVE Act more closely, and address these and any other concerns with its authors.

It is important to remember that behind any policy – whether a reformed visa process, a fine, or a new citizenship requirement – there is a real person. These often invisible janitors, hospitality workers, child care providers, and construction and factory foremen are providing vital services, fueling tremendous economic growth, and growing the pie for all Americans.

SEIU congratulates Representatives Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) for stepping up to the plate to launch the first bipartisan, comprehensive immigration legislation of the year. As the debate ensues – for the betterment of our economy and our nation – let’s hope Congress will honor the contributions of our native and immigrant workers and move quickly to pass smart, practical, reforms.”

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With 1.8 million members, SEIU is the fastest-growing union in North America. Focused on uniting workers in three sectors to improve their lives and the services they provide, SEIU is the largest health care union, including hospitals, nursing homes, and home care; the largest property services union, including building cleaning and security; and the second largest public employee union.

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