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Inglis, crowd differ on immigration
Most at town meeting oppose current bill

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By Paul Alongi
STAFF WRITER
palongi@greenvillenews.com

U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis invited his constituents to the Hughes Library in Greenville on Monday to tell him what they thought about immigration -- and they weren't shy.

A passionate crowd of about 150 people made it clear, sometimes by shouting, that they oppose a measure that would give about 12 million illegal immigrants a way to legally remain in the country.



The Travelers Rest Republican told his constituents that he disagreed with them on some points. One of them: He favors increasing the number of the nation's legal immigrants.

"There are a lot of people who are ready to sign a death certificate for America and say, 'That's enough, we're closing ó we're Europe,'" Inglis said. "If that's what you want, then run against me. I'm not signing the death certificate."

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A bipartisan bill in the U.S. Senate would allow illegal immigrants to remain in the country if they have a job, pass a criminal background check and pay a fine.

President Bush supports the bill.

Ed Diaz, who said his great-grandfather came to America in the 1800s, told Inglis that he is opposed to "any kind of amnesty agreement."

"Let them all go home and reapply like everybody else did when they came into this country," Diaz said.

Mark O'Rourke, one of the few supporters of the bill at the meeting, quickly learned how outnumbered he was. He was met with a chorus of boos when he proclaimed his support, but another supporter, Linda Hardin, spoke up.

"No one booted any of you," she yelled. "Now you keep your boos to yourself."

When the boos quieted, O'Rourke said the bill would get immigrants "out of the shadows."

"We can have a society that runs by the rule of law, instead of the status quo where 5 percent of the workforce is illegal," he said.

Inglis said that enforcing current law would mean that "12 million people must leave and never come back." Those are the people, he said, that "run our job sites."

Some in the crowd disputed supporters' argument that America needs guest workers.

"You can find some workers right here in the inner cities that would love to have these jobs that are being taken by them," Charles Harris said.

Paul Alongi can be reached at 298-4746.
