

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Tuesday, May 20, 2008
Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairwoman Woolsey Statement at Subcommittee Hearing On
“ICE Workplace Raids: The Impact on U.S. Citizen Children,
Families, and Communities”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Lynn Woolsey(D-CA), chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, for a subcommittee hearing on “ICE Workplace Raids: The Impact on U.S. Citizen Children, Families, and Communities.”*

I want to welcome all our witnesses for agreeing to participate in this very important hearing.

And while I am pleased to welcome all of you, I must give a special welcome to Katherine Gibney, the Principal at the San Pedro Elementary School in San Rafael, California. You see, Ms. Gibney is a constituent of mine.

Welcome, Ms. Gibney.

Today, we will explore the effects of the ICE raids on the children of immigrant parents.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, known as ICE, is the interior enforcement arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

Before 2006, the Bush Administration’s record on enforcement was not very good.

According to the GAO, in fiscal year 2004, there were only 445 unauthorized workers arrested, a drop from fiscal year 1999 of 84 percent.

In 2005, ICE made about 1,300 worksite arrests of undocumented immigrants.

But by 2006, ICE had increased its enforcement activities and made about 4,400 worksite arrests, more than triple than the year before.

In December, 2006, ICE launched “Operation Wagon Train” the largest worksite operation in history.

More than 1,000 ICE agents arrested about 1,300 people at 6 Swift & Co. meat processing plants located around the country.

Also in 2006, ICE launched a nationwide operation called “Operation Return to Sender,” which resulted in the 23,000 arrests at worksites and other locations, including people’s homes.

In 2007 and now in 2008, worksite raids and raids at other locations have continued at a steady pace.

Between October 2006 and January 2007, ICE raids in California resulted in the arrest of over 800 undocumented immigrants.

In March of 2007, ICE conducted raids in San Rafael and Novato, cities in my district.

And just last week, ICE conducted its biggest workplace raid this year at a meat processing plant in Postville, Iowa.

Of the 800-900 workers at the plant, over 300 were arrested.

Twelve of those arrested were children between the ages of 15 and 17.

They were working at the plant in violation of child labor laws.

As of last Thursday, they were still being detained.

And we now know that ICE conducted this raid even as the Department of Labor and Iowa state officials were investigating the owner of the plant for child labor violations.

We are very concerned that the raid will have the effect of derailing the investigation.

But today, we are looking at the impact of the raids on the children.

There are about 4.7 million children with who have at least at least one parent who is undocumented.

Of that number 3.1 million, or ---2/3 of these children----are U.S. citizens.

While we do not know the exact number of children who have had a parent arrested or deported, we know that thousands of children have been affected and that most of them are U.S. citizens themselves.

There will also be testimony today about the ICE guidelines, which were put into place in November 2007 and which outline humanitarian concerns officials should follow when conducting raids, are not being followed in a consistent fashion.

These guidelines are discretionary, and so ICE officials most likely have no real incentive to follow them.

As a result, we are still hearing heartbreaking stories of the impact on children.

They have witnessed their parents being arrested.

And they have had flashlights shown in their faces late at night.

With their families, they have hidden in their houses, basements, closets and some even under their beds, afraid that their parents and other family members will be taken.

They have been separated from their families in the cruelest of ways for long periods of time and many of their parents have been deported.

Some have been absent from school for days at a time, and children, especially young children are experiencing depression, separation anxiety, and in some serious cases, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Let me tell you about Kebin Reyes, a U.S. citizen, from my district.

He is now age 7.

In March 2007, when he was 6, ICE arrested his father---who is Kebin's sole parent in the U.S.--and Kebin was there to witness it.

When his father was arrested, Kebin was also taken and spent 10 hours in detention.

His father was detained for 6 weeks and during that time, Kebin had no idea if he would ever see his father again.

He experienced severe emotional trauma as a result.

Kebin is one of thousands of children who are living this same nightmare.

In Postville, Iowa, we have heard reports that at least 200 children had parents who were swept up in the raids last week.

Sister Mary McCauley who is assisting the children and their families told us that many, many children are staying at a local Catholic church sleeping on pews.

She said that most of these children are not going to school. They are traumatized and very fearful.

And this has affected the entire community of Postville, which has 2,300 residents.

Sister Mary McCauley is one of the very wonderful people---which includes teachers, members of the faith community, community organizers and others---who have worked tirelessly to make sure that these children's basic needs are being provided.

Some of these people are witnesses here today.

And we applaud them.

But unless ICE follows humanitarian procedures in conducting these raids, we are still left with traumatized children and communities.

Again, I want to thank our witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony.

<http://edlabor.house.gov>