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Comments by George H. Rodriguez, President of San Antonio Tea Party

Testimony before the Subcommittee on Immigration

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before this subcommittee regarding the impact of illegal immigrant workers on labor markets in the U.S. My comments today come from personal experience. I was born in Laredo, Texas, a border city where my family resided for over three generations. Illegal Mexican labor was a daily problem the family lived with through those generations.

My father, Eduardo Rodriguez, was a printer since the age of nine. He taught himself how to read and write proper English by working with the printing press. During the Depression, my father worked very hard to keep his job and make a decent wage that would support our family. The problem was not only the deep economic depression our nation was suffering, but also competition from illegal Mexican workers who crossed into Laredo, TX during the day, and then crossed back into Nuevo Laredo, Mexico at night. What was a low wage in the U.S. was a great wage in Mexico. The practice of working illegally in the U.S. and living in Mexico was common among Mexicans in those days, and was very much resented by Mexican Americans.

In 1938, my father began organizing a printers' union in Laredo to establish 'closed shops' as a way to stop the competition and undercutting of wages by Mexican aliens. For example, illegal Mexican workers would work for half the wages a Mexican American would request, because it cost less to live in Mexico. Also, Mexican Americans could be replaced very easily by illegal Mexican workers if they complained. U.S. employers hiring low paid, illegal Mexican workers cost Mexican American workers jobs. Additionally, illegal Mexican workers voted in American elections under the direction of their bosses. After nine difficult years, my father was successful in establishing a printers' union which kept illegal aliens from competing with American citizens for jobs. My father passed away in 1988, but he was very proud that the 1986 Immigration Reform Act contained Employer Sanctions for hiring illegal aliens.

My father's story is not unique, but rather typical of the experience most Mexican Americans have had in border towns. Even today, Mexican Americans, not just in border communities, but everywhere, will tell you that they do not want illegal aliens competing for their jobs in any form or fashion. Most Mexican Americans feel we must do something to stop aliens from entering the country illegally, and taking jobs from Americans using false documentation.

In closing, let me relate one more personal story. My mother passed away in 1987. A few days after her death, a distant acquaintance of the family asked if she could

“borrow” my mother’s social security number so someone could work. Another more recent incident happened last year with my sister when she was asked if she would lend another person her social security number.

My testimony is that we have a problem in America today, where Americans are adversely impacted by illegal aliens who compete for jobs. In this time of economic stress, we must do what we can to secure the border and to enforce existing laws against hiring illegal aliens. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity and privilege to speak to you.