

March 28, 2008

## Immigrant Driver's License Restrictions Weaken National Security

### Security Experts Agree – Immigrant Driver's License Restrictions Weaken Security

- ✓ Security experts have made clear that **it is counterproductive to deny identification documents to undocumented immigrants, because denying them identification makes the already difficult job of identifying terrorists even harder.**
- ✓ Kim Taipale, executive director of the Center for Advanced Studies in Science and director of the Program on Law Enforcement and National Security in the Information Age at the World Policy Institute, stated, **“Denying identity legitimacy to 13 million illegal aliens — the vast majority of whom are not terrorists or otherwise threats to national security — just increases the size of the suspect pool for law enforcement to have to sort through.** Since law enforcement resources are already unable to effectively cope with the large illegal alien population, why further complicate their task?”
- ✓ According to Margaret Stock, associate professor of law at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, **“Refusing to give driver licenses to illegal immigrants means taking [them] out of the largest law enforcement database in the country. Thus, denial of licenses is a policy prescription that hampers law enforcement far more than it enhances it.”**
- ✓ In 2005, the Government Accountability Office reported that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement found public and private databases, such as driver's license databases, to be more current than the DHS database and more reliable for tracking down immigrants. **Denying licenses to undocumented immigrants simply increases the pool of state residents who are not in any database used to track outstanding criminal warrants, child-support delinquents, and threats to national security.**

## **Immigrant driver's license restrictions are an ineffective way to fight terrorism.**

- ✓ **The real risk to U.S. security is in making immigrant communities afraid of the police.** Sophisticated terrorists will have the resources to get whatever documents they need to do their evil work. The ideal situation for terrorists is one where large segments of the population fear police contact. We need everyone's help, including immigrants, to help track them down.
- ✓ **Unnecessarily increasing the number of unlicensed drivers clogs courts and diverts scarce law-enforcement resources** away from saving lives and preventing terrorism.
- ✓ Unlike everyday immigrants, Al-Qaida and other sophisticated terrorists have the resources to travel legally, so they needn't be deterred by lawful presence restrictions. Sophisticated terrorists can also use their foreign passports to prove identity for almost any purpose. They also have access to technology to produce fake identity documents and have enough money and patience to bribe DMV employees if that becomes necessary to serve their purposes.

## **Immigrant driver's licenses restrictions would not have prevented September 11, 2001.**

- ✓ **The 9/11 Commission did not recommend that driver's licenses be issued only to people who could prove that they were legally in the United States.** Four of the five states that issued licenses to 9/11 hijackers had "immigration status" requirements at the time, and those hijackers were able to prove that they were here legally.
- ✓ Most of the 9/11 hijackers were in the U.S. lawfully and would have been able to get licenses even with immigrant restrictions. Others could have used their foreign passports as ID for rental housing, bank accounts, and boarding planes. Because of the large number of tourists and other visitors that travel in the U.S., foreign passports are likely to continue as acceptable forms of identification to board airplanes. If anything, **immigrant driver's license restrictions help terrorists by dividing immigrant communities from the police and diverting scarce resources.**

**The focus on immigrants since 9/11 has diverted attention from real security lapses that should be addressed.**

These include:

- Unfunded state and local homeland security efforts
- Unfunded public health departments
- Lack of security at ports and other critical infrastructure facilities
- Chaos at the Department of Homeland Security
- International intelligence gathering failures

**The best way to fight terrorism is for *all* non-terrorists, including immigrants, to unite.**