

Testimony from The American Legion
Department of Indiana
For Senate Bill 580
4 February 2009

Mr./Madam Chairman:

Thank you for granting The American Legion the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 580 this morning.

The American Legion National Organization has several standing resolutions regarding the issue of illegal immigration but today, I will provide our basic outline of how we believe the issue of illegal immigration should be addressed. The American Legion is opposed to any person or persons being in this country illegally, regardless of race, sex, creed, color or national origin. We believe the current laws governing immigration should be enforced impartially and equally.

The American Legion members have served in the U.S. Armed forces throughout the world so that Americans can feel safe at home. They have seen Third World countries. They have seen poverty, political instability, disease and war. The sacrifices they have made give them a perspective on national security issues that many Americans do not have. And, today, they see the threat that open borders present to their homeland.

The American Legion, a war-time veterans organization of 2.6 million members, supports an immigration policy that eliminates social, economic and population problems resulting from illegal immigration. But above all, the Legion views illegal immigration as a national security issue in its truest sense. It urges Congress to act responsibly in addressing the issue by accepting its responsibility as outlined in the U.S. Constitution. That is, "to provide for the common defense," and, most importantly to provide for the safety of the citizens of this country. Sadly, the federal government has, for the most part, abandoned this responsibility.

The American Legion proposes a Five Step Approach and two of those steps deal directly with the intent of SB 580.

The Legion proposes in **step 1**: To secure the borders and other points of entry.
Step 2 is: To eliminate the jobs magnet and social services benefits for illegals. In conjunction with the intent of SB 580, The American Legion supports mandatory eligibility verification of all employees. Employer sanctions put into place following the 1986 amnesty programs were not enforced, a principal reason for the current immigration crisis. The American Legion supports enforcement of immigrant hiring laws and advocates civil penalties for employers who knowingly hire illegal workers.
Step 3 is NO AMNESTY.
Step 4 is simply: to reduce the number of illegal in the United States and SB 580 addresses that objective as well, by requiring mandatory workplace verification of

immigration status, as well as creating a means by which state, federal, and local law enforcement can cooperate on enforcing the law.

Step 5 is: to effectively screen and track ALL foreign visitors.

In conclusion, The American Legion is not specifically opposed to guest worker programs that are intended to fill labor shortages in the United States. Such programs, however, must not reward illegal immigrants with an amnesty or forgiveness for previous unlawful behavior.

There can be no homeland security until the United States takes control of its borders. There can be no fair labor practices with a workforce composed of illegal workers. As a nation of laws, the United States sends a wrong message by forgiving and rewarding those who break our laws by entering this country illegally. We cannot be secure when 10 million to 20 million individuals whom we don't know are in this country unlawfully. We believe that the intent of SB 580 strives to provide those needed protections.