



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on March 21, 2011

Leftist SEIU Unhappy with Obama on Immigration

While leftist immigration advocates typically view the Obama administration as an ally, one of the most important players in both Democratic Party politics and the debate on illegal immigration — the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) — is for the first time openly criticizing the Department of Homeland Security's shift in enforcement efforts.



SEIU is the nation's largest, most leftist, and most politically-active labor union, whose membership is comprised of nurses, home health aides, custodians, superintendents, and other such workers.

The Obama administration has shifted the emphasis of enforcement away from workplace raids — which immigrant advocates have long described as punishing immigrant workers instead of their employers — and toward so-called “I-9 audits,” in which federal agents ask companies to verify their employees' legal status.

Though groups pushing to legalize most immigrant workers are broadly uncomfortable with the audits — which often cost workers their jobs — they have largely avoided criticizing the administration publicly. But SEIU has seen hundreds of members lose their jobs after I-9 audits: According to the union, 1,200 SEIU janitors in Minneapolis were fired following an I-9 audit last December, and just this week, 250 SEIU janitors in Minneapolis were fired after an I-9 audit, adding to 500 in the area who were fired from Chipotle Mexican Grill, reports Ben Smith of [Politico](#), after the company was scrutinized by Homeland Security officials.

In a statement, Javier Morillo, [president](#) of SEIU Local 26 in Minnesota, offers the following criticisms of the I-9 audits:

Under the leadership of Secretary Napolitano the federal government has become an employment agency for the country's worst employers. With each I-9 audit, the government is systematically pushing hardworking people into the underground economy where they face exploitation. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reports targeting egregious employers that exploit workers — but it's become increasingly obvious that this policy is nothing short of lip service. Let's be clear: I-9 audits, by definition, do not go after egregious employers who break immigration laws because many of them do not use I-9 forms. Human traffickers do not ask their victims for their social security cards.

Secretary [Janet] Napolitano, [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] Director [John] Morton and the agencies they represent are at the forefront of a damaging policy shift in this country — one in which good, hardworking people are hand-delivered to the underground economy. SEIU fights for economic justice across this country, and we can no longer sit silently while communities are devastated by reckless policies.



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The specific immigration policy [in question](#), I-9 audits, is also known as the E-Verify program. ICE Spokesman Shawn Neudauer [says](#) that ICE offers a Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers, a voluntary program which assists employers in developing a stabler and more secure workforce by offering free education and training on proper hiring procedures, fraudulent document detection, the use of the E-Verify employment eligibility verification program, and anti-discrimination procedures.

SEIU head [Eliseo Medina](#) (whose subversive leadership in the immigration movement is explored in The John Birch Society presentation "[Constitution Sí, Amnesty No](#)"), however, expresses the opposition of the labor union to the E-Verify program. SEIU claims that enforcing immigration laws in the workplace is a jobs killer, and that the E-Verify program "further delays immigration reform." SEIU's goal, shared with the Left, is complete amnesty for illegal aliens.

Constitutionalists believe that mandatory E-Verify is the wrong solution at the wrong time. Unless E-Verify is part of broader, more comprehensive immigration reforms that restore fairness to the economy by ending illegal immigration, this job-killing bill would undermine economic recovery, waste billions of taxpayer dollars, and actually expand the underground economy. This government mandate would cost taxpayers billions of dollars by pushing undocumented workers off the tax rolls and deeper into the underground economy.

Other egregious examples of SEIU's activities against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) include numerous protests in which union members [claimed](#) that enforcement of I-9 audits and use of the E-Verify program are "out-of-control," indicating the fundamental connection between the amnesty movement and the communist-socialist left: Says Medina, "ICE's 'strategy' of sowing misery in workplaces and communities not only fails to tackle the underlying issue of our broken immigration system — it also contradicts efforts to improve wages and working conditions of all U.S. workers."

Furthermore, [Rep. Luis Gutierrez \(D-Ill.\)](#), a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, sent a letter of complaint to Janet Napolitano in which he stated:

I am astounded by how inconsistent these reports are with your stated priorities, and am left to wonder what your true priorities are, or to what degree agency directors and agents in the field actually understand and/or follow your stated priorities.

While Obama and Homeland Security Director Janet Napolitano [criticized](#) the George W. Bush administration for emphasizing factory raids and neighborhood sweeps, and promised instead to focus on deporting the most dangerous illegal immigrants, immigrant advocates have reported that thousands of ordinary workers are still being forced into the underground economy by electronic audits of companies' hiring records.

In light of recent disclosures that ICE is changing how it evaluates agents to emphasize caseload quotas, and is widening the categories of people it targets for deportation to sustain high removal statistics, Medina claimed that the reality of DHS's actions is not matching the administration's rhetoric:

They said they were going after criminals. They need to do that. They said they were going after bad actor employers to take away the profit motive. They need to do that. But instead, they are still going after meatpackers, janitors and cooks.

There has been a failure with this strategy, and so there's a lot of anger within our union, because



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we look at and see the everyday impact of these policies, and it's the complete opposite of what they said they were going to do.

SEIU already influences the Democratic Party in states with fusion voting through the Working Families Party, and through groups such as the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Progressive Democrats of America, and Democratic Socialists of America. However, in North Carolina, dissatisfied with the anti-DREAM Act stance of Democratic Senator Kay Hagan, and the anti-ObamaCare Democrats Heath Shuler, Mike McIntyre, and Larry Kissell, the union [launched](#) the "[North Carolina First Party](#)," a third party which aims to sway politics there in a more leftward direction.

This represents yet another issue in which the ideologues of the far left are [dissatisfied](#) with Obama's leadership on issues such as the Patriot Act, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his relationship with corporations and his program of [business outreach](#) (such as his appointment of banking executive William Daly as White House Chief of Staff). Just as these progressives are unhappy with ICE workplace enforcements, so too are prominent leftists such as Naomi Klein and Noam Chomsky dissatisfied over the President's use of military tribunals, retention of Robert Gates and Ben Bernanke, wiretapping, and corporatism. This dissatisfaction is highlighted in *The Mendacity of Hope: Barack Obama and the Betrayal of American Liberalism*, which discusses the Obama administration's failure to deliver on numerous campaign promises to his leftist base of unions, immigrant groups, and race-based associations, as well as feminist, homosexual, "economic justice," socialist, and anti-war organizations.

Graphic: Top, the SEIU logo; bottom, President Barack Obama signs the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law on February 17, 2009.



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