



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 11, 2013

Rallies Push for Senate Action on Immigration Legislation

Thousands of supporters of immigration reform gathered in Washington, D.C., on April 10, with the main event of the day being the [Citizenship for 11 Million](#) rally held on the West Lawn of the Capitol. The [Washington Post](#) reported that the rally was co-sponsored by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and CASA of Maryland, identified as an “immigrant advocacy group.”



The rally came shortly before the anticipated unveiling of the immigration legislation package crafted by the bipartisan “Gang of Eight” senators.

“We’ve been through this before, but this time it’s different,” Gustavo Torres, executive director of CASA of Maryland, told attendees at the Washington rally. “We are different, and Washington is different. The politicians can’t ignore us now. We will become citizens, and we will vote.”

A report from CBS News observed that many attendees at the rally carried hand-lettered signs and chanted “Si, se puede,” Spanish for “Yes, we can.”

“We won’t win immigration reform just coming to Washington. We need to walk the streets all over the country,” Ben Monterroso, national director of civic participation for the SEIU, told the crowd.

Similar rallies were held this week in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. All followed a similar theme, calling for amnesty for illegal immigrants, described less obviously as a “pathway to citizenship.”

An online program of events posted on the [rally website](#) stated that a goal of the event was to see “tens of thousands of immigrants and supporters unite in support of common sense immigration reform now that includes citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people living in this country.”

The co-masters of ceremony of the event were the above-mentioned Gustavo Torres and Jaime Contreras, vice-president of SEIU’s New York-based Local 32BJ, the latter showcasing the union’s prominent role in immigration political lobbying. Among a lengthy list of political figures addressing the rally were Senator Robert Menendez (D.-N.J., a “Gang of Eight” member) and Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D.-Ill.) described as “long-time champions of immigrant rights.” Since those who have emigrated legally to our nation have no need for a special “path to citizenship,” it can be presumed that Menendez and Gutierrez are long-time champions of *illegal* immigrants’ rights.

The speakers addressing the rally formed a diverse (some might even say “motley”) group. They included Benjamin Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP, Mary Kay Henry, president of SEIU, Bob King, president of United Auto Workers (UAW), Lily Eskelsen, vice president of the National Education Association (NEA), Arturo Rodriguez, president of United Farm Workers (UFW), Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (who spoke “on behalf of the progressive movement”), and Dolores Huerta, the “labor and civil rights activist,” who together with César Chávez co-founded the National Farmworkers Association (NFA), which later became the UFW. Huerta was



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lavishly described as a “beloved hero in the long struggle for respect for immigrant communities.”

In addition to her prominent role helping César Chávez found the NFA, [noted writer Alex Newman](#), Huerta, who is a “[self-described](#) ‘born-again feminist,’ has also drawn fire for working with and praising the [late] socialist Venezuelan [tyrant Hugo Chávez](#), who was famous for jailing critics and political opponents, stealing property, waging war on press freedom, rigging elections, and establishing collective farms. Somehow, the infamous despot [had] managed to drive the formerly wealthy oil-rich economy into the ground so thoroughly — mostly through nationalization and wealth-redistribution schemes — that even water and electricity are now rationed.”

“Incredibly, “ noted Newman, while “speaking to students in 2006 about Chávez’s dictatorial rule, Huerta publicly [wondered](#) ‘why can’t we do that here in the United States?’ ”

(For background on the radical history of César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and United Farm Workers, read “[Obama’s Tribute to Radical Labor Leader César Chávez](#).”)

We noted the prominent role of the Service Employees International Union in sponsoring this week’s Citizenship for 11 Million rally, and the SEIU has been the source of much controversy. [For example](#),

In April 2010, The National Labor Relations Board regional office in Winston-Salem, North Carolina issued a federal complaint against a local SEIU chapter for maintaining an “annual objection” policy designed to force nursing home workers into full union dues payments against their will.

In June 2003, SEIU was found guilty of violating security workers’ rights and ordered to pay back dues and fees to over 400 workers.

In December 2010, SEIU agreed in a settlement to stop trying to prevent workers who do not support its activities from coming to work at Morehouse College dining venues operated by Sodexo.

During a drive to organize 10,000 healthcare workers in November 2009, SEIU was accused of ballot rigging and using intimidation to persuade workers to vote in SEIU instead of the National Union of Healthcare Workers

As noted previously, the consistent goal promoted by the rally’s organizers is “common sense immigration reform now that includes citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people living in this country.”

This proposal is far from unique, however, and calls for a “path to citizenship” (i.e., amnesty) for the 11 million undocumented (i.e., residing in the United States illegally) people have come from prominent spokesmen on both sides of the political aisle.

With the bipartisan senate plan about to be unveiled any day, it is noteworthy that a report in *The Hill* on March 19 said: “The Gang of Eight has made progress on creating a path to citizenship for an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants, according to reports in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.”

Even “Gang of Eight” member Marco Rubio, considered to be a conservative elected with Tea Party support, has said: “We can’t round up millions of people and deport them.”

Neither Rubio nor others promoting a “pathway to citizenship” has explained why enforcing present immigration law is impossible. Decriminalizing lawbreaking only invites more of the same. When President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 into law, an amnesty initiative was granted to individuals who unlawfully entered the country prior to January 1, 1982 and



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could provide evidence that they had resided in the United States since arriving illegally.

Reagan's attorney general, Edwin Meese II, acknowledged the failure of the program in an op-ed piece for the *New York Times* on May 24, 2006 entitled "An Amnesty by Any Other Name...": "The 1986 act did not solve our illegal immigration problem.... After a six-month slowdown that followed passage of the legislation, illegal immigration returned to normal levels and continued unabated."

This week's "immigration reform" rallies focused a spotlight on one side of the argument, the pro-amnesty side. But there is another side to the controversy. Roy Beck, president of the anti-amnesty group NumbersUSA, was quoted in an AP story published by [USA Today](#):

"There ought to be a rally for the 20 million Americans who can't find a full-time job," Beck said. "If the Gang of Eight could look out on the (Washington) Mall and see all those Americans shut out of the job market, would they really make their highest priority a bill to immediately give work permits to 7 million illegal-alien workers while increasing visas for new foreign labor?"

Beck asks the senators to use common sense instead of playing politics, which is likely an optimistic expectation.

Photo of immigration reform rally in Washington, D.C., April 10: AP Images

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