

SEIU Urges Coordination with Dept. of Labor to Target Most Egregious Employers

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SEIU has sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano, expressing deep concerns about the Department's recently announced decision to send I-9 audit notices to 1,000 additional employers--notices that are off target because they will result in the dismissal of thousands of workers but will let the worst employers off the hook.

SEIU Executive Vice President Eliseo Medina issued the following statement:

"DHS' plan to audit 1,000 new employers may sound tough--but the words ring hollow because the plan is not smart, targeted or effective.

Based on its previous announcements, we had expected DHS to target egregious employers and criminals who break labor laws, but instead these seemingly arbitrary audits actually benefit abusive, off-the-books employers who push down wages and working conditions for all workers.

The resulting churning of the workforce is harmful to local economies and communities.

It is demoralizing to the workforce that remains in the affected workplaces, but gets us no closer to fixing our broken immigration system.

America deserves an enforcement program with real teeth that punishes the most abusive employers--not the hard-working immigrants they exploit.

To accomplish this, SEIU urges DHS to coordinate all workplace enforcement with the Department of Labor **so it can effectively target and punish employers who intentionally take advantage of our broken system to exploit their workers**--both legal and undocumented--by illegally paying workers off the books, harassing them, and forcing them to work in abusive and unhealthful conditions.

By failing to coordinate its workplace enforcement with Department of Labor, DHS is missing a critical opportunity to reduce and deter some of the most egregious employment practices. Targeting these bad actors would actually curb the behavior and deincestivize the practice of intentionally hiring unauthorized workers.

America needs an enforcement program that differs in substance, not just form, from the failures of the Bush administration. We need a program with real teeth to punish the most abusive employers--not just the hardworking immigrants they are exploiting.

We need a modern enforcement system that is part of a broader strategy to lift wages and standards for all workers. Until then, the Department of Homeland Security is just playing a losing game of musical chairs.