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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0524

August 23, 2011

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The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Recently, your Administration announced the creation of a new working group that will begin a case-by-case review of illegal immigrants in deportation proceedings and with a final order of removal to determine if those individuals should be deported at the agency's discretion. This working group appears to have the specific purpose of overruling, on a "case-by-case" basis, an immigration court's final order of deportation and removal, or preventing that court from even issuing such an order. In effect, your Administration is implementing a backdoor amnesty for people who are violating federal immigration laws.

As someone who has worked on this issue for more than twenty years, I cannot sit back and not express my extremely strong disapproval with your new policy. This decision, in addition to undermining the enforcement of our immigration laws, is a direct assault on the fourteen million Americans and legal immigrants who are looking for a job to support themselves and their families. It will result in higher unemployment and lower wages and benefits for many Americans, especially, but not limited to, those in the minority community.

There have been many examples demonstrating that when our immigration laws are enforced, legal workers benefit. Earlier this year, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials conducted an investigation of Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurants which resulted in approximately 500 illegal immigrant workers being fired. By all accounts, Chipotle had no trouble hiring Americans citizens to immediately fill the positions. And in 2008, after ICE raided a Columbia Farms processing plant in South Carolina and more than 300 illegal workers were detained, Columbia Farms quickly replaced all of the illegal workers.

The myth that illegal immigrants only take jobs that American workers will not do is just that: a myth. Recent studies estimate that most of the jobs associated with illegal immigrants are actually held by American citizens. Eighty percent of cooks, 75 percent of construction workers, 78 percent of housekeeping personnel and 75 percent of groundskeepers are legal American workers. That means that 20 percent of cooks, 25 percent of construction workers, 22 percent of housekeeping personnel and 25 percent of groundskeepers are illegal immigrants taking jobs from American workers.

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Further, allowing illegal immigrants to continue to live and work in this country will only encourage more people to unlawfully cross our borders or overstay their visa period. This will exacerbate our current economic downturn and foster disrespect for our nation's laws.

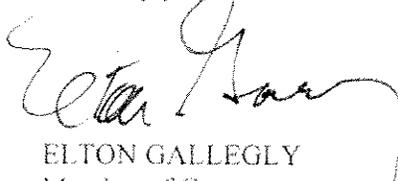
As the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration Policy and Enforcement, I was also incensed that this new policy was announced during the August District Work Period, when Members of Congress are unable to respond to such a far-reaching change in policy. Congress has repeatedly declined to enact amnesty, the DREAM Act, or any other proposal that would allow the legalization of large numbers of illegal immigrants.

The United States Constitution provides that Congress should establish immigration policy. It is the role of the Executive Branch to faithfully implement the laws. Any discretion granted to you by Congress was intended to be limited and used rarely. Granting what is effectively an amnesty to 300,000 illegal immigrants in the process of being deported is a clear abuse of your discretion.

This newly-announced policy gives credence to the American people's argument that you are not sufficiently focused on real job creation. Most every American, even those who are employed, believes our country faces enormous economic difficulties. However, for the millions who are unemployed, this is not a time of economic difficulty or even a recession, this is a depression. As President Harry Truman said, "It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job; it's a depression when you lose yours." Mr. President, every illegal immigrant who takes a job that would otherwise be filled by an American just adds to the number of Americans facing economic depression.

For the sake of hard-working Americans and the future of our country, I urge you to reverse this policy and work with Congress to enact common-sense immigration reform that will lower the number of Americans and legal immigrants who are unemployed and reduce the high number of illegal immigrants working in this country.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elton Gallegly", written over a light blue horizontal line.

ELTON GALLEGLY  
Member of Congress