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VT Farm Workers Deliver Petition to Governor Shumlin and Senator Leahy Seeking Support to Stop Immigration Enforcements' Widely Discredited "Secure Communities Program"

National Day of Action Puts Pressure on Obama Administration's Empty Promises and Controversial Deportation Program

Thursday, August 18th, 8:30 am. Burlington, VT--A group of Vermont farm workers, taking time away from their 60-80 hour work weeks, traveled to the state house today to express concern and seek support from Governor Shumlin to speak out against Immigration Enforcement's widely discredited "Secure Communities" program. Though the workers weren't able to meet directly with Governor Shumlin or Senator Leahy they did meet with Diane Bothfield, the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and John Tracy of Senator Leahy's office to express their concern about the program, which is scheduled to be imposed on Vermont in 2013 due to a highly criticized recent Obama Administration decision that has inspired nation-wide protests this week. A scathing report of Secure Communities program was released on Tuesday by the National Day Laborers Organizing Network and this action was timed to draw attention to the report (available: <http://altopolimigra.com/s-comm-shadow-report/>).

Over Lopez, who helped gather 70 farm worker signatures and delivered the petition explains the reason for his visit to the state house today explained at the 10am press conference from the state capital, "I am here to ask for support from the Governor, to do whatever he can to not participate in the (in)Secure Community Program. I also want the people of Vermont, the Governor and Vermont Representatives to tell Obama to fulfill his unfulfilled promises to the Latino Community that helped elect him by stopping this unjust program that is tearing apart our communities and work for comprehensive and just immigration reform."

There are approximately 1200-1500 migrant workers that help sustain Vermont's struggling dairy farms. With most living without documented status in one of the whitest and most rural states in the country, migrant dairy workers are subjected to aggressive racial profiling practices that convert many workers into virtual prisoners on the farm. Many farmers and even the Vermont department of agriculture widely acknowledge that without migrant farm workers many of Vermont's iconic dairy farms would not exist. Should Vermont adopt Secure Communities farm workers and farmers fear conditions will only worsen.

The VT farm worker community also released an open letter to Vermont farmers seeking their support, it reads, "Such programs also affect you as an employer because when we run the risk of arrest, it leaves you without workers and damages your farms and threatens your income. In order to recruit new people you must again teach them the operations of the farm, only to run the risk of repeating this history over again."

Danilo Lopez, one of the Vermont farmworker leaders who organized the petition drive and delivered it explains, "Many of us in the farm worker community are aware that President Obama campaigned on immigration reform and yet is quickly becoming the Deporter-in-Chief- but today we are asking the people of Vermont, Governor Shumlin and Representatives Leahy, Sanders and Welch to ensure that Vermont has no interest in being his accomplice. We want to keep our families together. We need to keep police and ICE separate. No to S-Comm!"