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GOOD FIRST STEPS, BUT PATH REMAINS TO BE SEEN

National Immigration Law Center Calls upon Secretary Napolitano to Take Leadership in Promoting Immigration Reform Efforts

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama yesterday reiterated his commitment to immigration reform during an important conversation on comprehensive immigration reform between Secretary for Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and law enforcement, faith, business, and immigration leaders.

“We are encouraged to see that the administration remains committed to enacting real and humane immigration reform in the near future,” said Marielena Hincapié, a meeting attendee and executive director of the National Immigration Law Center (NILC).

During their discussions, Hincapié stressed to Napolitano and her team the need for inter-agency collaboration in revamping labor and employment law enforcement to discourage employers who recruit, hire, and exploit undocumented workers. She called on the Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) to work with federal labor and employment agencies, which Secretary Napolitano agreed was important.

“By focusing on labor rights, we can improve conditions for all workers as well as remove incentives for unscrupulous employers to hire laborers who are unable to defend their rights,” Hincapié said. “If the administration continues to rely exclusively on law enforcement-based measures, it will risk increasing the distrust of the federal and local governments among undocumented men and woman, making future comprehensive immigration reform promises more difficult for the public to accept.

“Only time will tell as to whether yesterday’s meeting was simply a listening session or whether today’s actions represent a shift in policy priorities for Napolitano to move her energy away from focusing solely on immigration enforcement measures and begin advocating for humane and just immigration reform.”

The National Immigration Law Center works to promote and advance the rights of low-income immigrants and their families.

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