

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



815 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 637-5000
www.aflcio.org

JOHN J. SWEENEY
PRESIDENT

Gerald W. McEntee
Frank Hurt
Michael Goodwin
Robert A. Scardelletti
Boyd D. Young
Elizabeth Bunn
Terence O'Sullivan
Cheryl Johnson, R.N.
Edward C. Sullivan
Edward J. McElroy Jr.
Baxter M. Atkinson
Nat LaCour
Michael T. O'Brien

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

RICHARD L. TRUMKA
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Morton Bahr
Gloria T. Johnson
William Lucy
Andrew L. Stern
Dennis Rivera
Michael J. Sullivan
Harold Schaitberger
Bruce Raynor
William Burrus
Ron Gettelfinger
John Gage
Jack Cipriani

Gene Upshaw
Clayola Brown
Leon Lynch
John M. Bowers
Stuart Appelbaum
James P. Hoffa
Edwin D. Hill
Clyde Rivers
Leo W. Gerard
James Williams
Joseph T. Hansen
Vincent Giblin

LINDA CHAVEZ-THOMPSON
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Michael Sacco
Patricia Friend
Arturo S. Rodriguez
R. Thomas Buffenbarger
John W. Wilhelm
Capt. Duane Woerth
Joseph J. Hunt
Cecil Roberts
Melissa Gilbert
John J. Flynn
William H. Young
William Hite

For Immediate Release

Contact: Esmeralda Aguilar 202-637-5018

Statement by AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson On False OSHA Meeting Used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in North Carolina Raid July 14, 2005

At a time when injury and fatality rates among undocumented workers are soaring, it's unconscionable that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency would lure immigrant workers in North Carolina into arrest by using a phony Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) meeting. ICE put out a flyer to all workers at the construction site, in English and Spanish, telling workers to attend a mandatory health and safety meeting and promising coffee and doughnuts. Workers need to be able to rely on OSHA for their safety on the job - - and often their lives - - without fear of repercussion. For immigration officials to undermine that trust in the name of an "undercover" raid is fundamentally wrong.

Latino and immigrant workers are among those facing the greatest risks of injury and death on the job. According to the latest US government data, on average, 15 workers were fatally injured and more than 12,000 workers were injured or made ill each day on their jobs in 2003. Of the 5,559 workers killed by job injuries in 2003, nearly 900 were immigrant workers.

Not only do such tactics scare workers away, making it less likely that workplace dangers will be exposed, but these tactics don't comply with the government's own policies. It is OSHA's policy to keep the identity of those who file complaints confidential and not to collect data concerning citizenship status. The reason for these policies is simple: if workers believe that they or their families are at risk of being deported, they will not speak out about dangerous or unhealthful conditions. ICE's actions not only undermine OSHA's mission, but they also seriously erode the trust between agencies charged with protecting workers and the immigrant community.

Instead of scaring workers into silence by these types of immigration enforcement actions, the Bush Administration should be focusing on crafting real solutions to our broken immigration system. We have long advocated for a solution that includes a path to citizenship for undocumented workers who have been working hard, paying their taxes and contributing to their communities, and guarantees that all workers—whether US or foreign born—have enforceable rights and decent work.