

For Immediate Release
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Statement: It's time for common-sense, humane immigration reform

The following is a statement from Becky Gould, Executive Director of Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest.

“Now that the health care bill has passed, it is time to address another key issue that underpins our economic and community well-being. This weekend brought more than 200,000 people to Washington, D.C. to march for America and common-sense, humane immigration reform. Nebraska Appleseed and Nebraskans of many backgrounds joined the effort. Hundreds more held events here at home.

The participants' varied backgrounds made the point that this is an issue that impacts us all. We can't build a strong economic recovery on top of a teetering immigration system. Many of us live in communities currently being divided by an outdated system. We can't bear to continue watching a system operating in our name that separates families, tears children from parents, and denies due process of law. We all want immigration laws we can stand behind and that live up to our nation's traditions and values. We need a workable system that moves us forward together. It defies logic to refuse to update the immigration system so that it matches today's needs and realities.

This was the message brought to D.C. by more than 33 Nebraskans including faith leaders, leaders of Nebraska cities and towns, immigrants, educators, legal service providers, and students. Traveling by plane and some 42 hours by bus, representatives from the League of Nebraska Municipalities, churches, towns large and small across the state, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and others participated in Sunday's march and visits to members of Congress on Monday. At home, five churches and 300 people gathered in Grand Island on Saturday, while hundreds more attended a prayer vigil and celebratory Mass in Omaha.

We had a good portion of this discussion in Congress in 2007, so we're several steps ahead in the policy work. It is time to put a workable system in place – for everyone's sake. To paraphrase Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-SC), who is working with Sen. Schumer (D-NY) on a Senate bill, laws are enforceable when they are just. Their effort builds on Rep Luis Gutierrez's House bill that already has 100 cosponsors. Let's get back to a system of which we can be proud, one that represents our tradition of law and a workable process for welcoming new immigrants.”