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Immigration to the Chicago Area

Testimony by Tom Faber

Of the groups whose testimony the Commission will entertain today, the Illinois Citizens for Immigration Reform is distinctive for two reasons.

First, unlike the myriad special interest immigration welfare advocacy groups here today, ICIR receives no financial support from out-of-state foundations and corporations with their own immigration-related agendas.

Second, ICIR, rather than representing narrow special interests, focuses on the legitimate needs and demands of the larger Illinois community in this important debate.

We are not propped up by massive infusions of money from New York and Washington to propound a narrow special interest agenda; we simply represent the voice of the people of the state and the greater metropolitan area.

As several of our volunteers — and we are an all-volunteer organization — went throughout the metropolitan area speaking to homeowners in Berwyn, retirees in Glenview, students at Northwestern University, midshipmen at Great Lakes [Naval Training Station], parents in Aurora and Melrose Park, and community watch groups on the north and southwest sides of the city, we found a growing rage and resentment over the seemingly uncontrolled wave of immigration sweeping into the metro area.

It was clear to us that we were striking a responsive chord in advocating reasonable legislative efforts to curtail this — the largest wave of immigration in the history of the United States. We sought to quantify the depth of public dissatisfaction in the Chicago metropolitan area, and this past spring we did that. We commissioned an independent polling firm, Richard Day Research in Evanston, to survey residents in the three-county metro area (Cook, DuPage and Lake counties) as to their views on immigration. This is the same firm that conducts the Chicago Sun-Times poll and the ABC WLS TV poll.

Asking essentially the same question which appeared in an August 1992 nationwide Roper poll, we found that a full 57 percent of people in the Chicago metropolitan area believe that under current immigration laws too many immigrants are settling in the Chicago area each year.

A mere 27 percent of respondents supported the

current immigration policy by saying that the right number of immigrants are settling in the Chicago area. A negligible 3 percent thought too few immigrants were coming here, with the balance undecided.

Those who thought too many immigrants were settling here:

58% of whites	64% of Republicans
57% of blacks	59% of Democrats
54% of Hispanics	57% of Independents
50% of those saying "other race"	

It is clear to any but the most fuzzy-headed observer that the current federal immigration policy — or non-policy — has lost the confidence of the people of the Chicago metropolitan area.

Several weeks ago, *Newsweek* characterized present U.S. immigration policy as akin to "entering the twilight zone at rush hour except that there is no Rod Serling to offer traffic updates."

The people of the Chicago metropolitan area sense this. They see it. They see it daily in their own neighborhoods, in their schools, at their courthouses, and they see it quite graphically once a year when their taxes come due.

The unprecedented and unwarranted wave of 1.2 to 1.5 million immigrants annually entering the U.S. is having dire economic consequences on this, the third largest metropolitan area in terms of immigrant settlement.

Here in Illinois, taxpayers — and predominantly local property taxpayers — are spending \$196 million a year in services to the estimated 315,000 illegal aliens who have illicitly settled here.

This past February our governor, Jim Edgar, asserted that the drain on Illinois social service resources by illegal aliens is now such that we are denying services to our own legitimate citizens.

Would someone please explain to me why last summer, while walking my dog along the Foster Avenue Beach, I should run into two Vietnam veterans — one black and one white — who are sleeping on park benches, while at the same time, under a federal government mandate, the State of Illinois is providing free housing to 175 families who sneaked into our country illegally?

The people of Illinois are asking the same question and they're not getting any rational explanations — for

in reality there are none. That is why we are not in the least surprised that a full 77% of the people in the Chicago metro poll support an immediate cessation of federal requirements for the provision of services to illegal aliens.

This, incidentally, is precisely what is proposed by the recently introduced Immigration Moratorium Act, a bi-partisan measure which we fully support and which has already been co-sponsored by two members of our Illinois delegation to the House of Representatives.

The problem is not solely limited to illegal immigration; indeed, that is likely the smaller problem in the equation.

Here in Chicago, our schools almost didn't open last fall. They had a \$300 million budget shortfall. Yet at the same time, according to their own budget office estimates, the Chicago public schools were spending \$450 million educating recent immigrants. That number increases by 15 percent a year.

The national studies, particularly the one done by Donald Huddle of Rice University and David Simcox, former director of the Center for Immigration Studies, contend that recent immigrants, on balance, are in no way paying for these social services. Indeed, they are a net drain on the social service delivery system to the tune of \$42 billion a year. Barring any convincing evidence to the contrary, we have no reason to believe that this is not correspondingly the case in the Chicago metropolitan area.

In any event, there is no question that the 5,000 illegal alien inmates currently in Illinois prisons are not a benefit to society. We spend \$45 million a year just for their incarceration. If there is one thing that Chicago has never been short of, it's home-grown criminals. We don't need to import them.

Further, when the Ford Foundation-funded immigrant welfare advocates — many of whom are here today — pushed the Chicago sanctuary measure back in 1988, whereby Chicago police were precluded from substantive cooperation with the INS — the Chicago Crime Commission predicted that it would make Chicago a safe haven for alien criminal gangs.

They were right. Over the past three years the INS has deported 823 city and suburban alien criminal gangsters, and those are only the ones who have, to date, wended their way through the cumbersome deportation processes.

Immigration has added over a quarter million to Chicago's population over the past decade. This does not take into account the cumulative population impact of those immigrants whose fertility rates are higher than that of the native population. The Census Bureau's new high level assumptions for population growth place the U.S. population at more than half a billion by the year 2050. Most of this massive population growth would be the direct result of post-1990 immigration.

The thought of a half-billion Americans is mind-

boggling, but it is precisely where we're headed unless this unprecedented wave of illegal *and* legal immigration is curtailed.

We urge this Commission to recommend measures akin to those contained in the Immigration Moratorium Act (HR 3352). A temporary reduction in the overall numbers of legal admittances to about the level of 200,000 a year is absolutely essential for communities such as ours. The badly overdue strengthening of border controls inherent in this measure is imperative.

At this level, a reduction which the Ford Foundation-funded immigration welfare advocates label "draconian," the U.S. would still be admitting more immigrants than any other nation in the world. Yet it would give our communities a badly needed respite from the plethora of problems attendant on uncontrolled immigration.

The people of the Chicago Metropolitan Area are saying quite clearly, "We've had enough!" It is our hope that in its recommendations, this commission takes note of that, before the general credibility of Congress is further undermined. ■