

Statement from Congressman Luis Gutierrez  
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"Five years ago, an earthquake would not have been able to plunge Postville into a greater sense of loss and confusion than the federal government did that day," said Rep. Luis Gutierrez. "I remember the stories of the parents and the children who could not find each other, a community simply devastated by the raid, and the religious community stepping up to help, provide shelter, and provide information in the vacuum. Postville instantly became iconic in the American Latino community for why we need immigration reform and it is still an image that haunts and inspires me."

"It is hard to believe that only five years have passed since the era of massive militaristic workplace raids were taken to a new level in Postville," Gutierrez said. "The dramatic, headline grabbing raids have mostly stopped, but the urgent need for immigration reform has only intensified. About two million immigrants have been deported in the last five years in a quieter but equally devastating escalation of deportation in this country."

"In 2013, we still need a legal immigration system that works and we still need labor rights and legalization extended to vulnerable workers like those who worked the line in the plant that day," Rep. Gutierrez said. "Reforming immigration is within reach this year and it is the only way we establish law and order, the only way we stabilize the economy in some communities, and the only way we respect the human rights and dignity of immigrants. I hope people are reminded of the cost of inaction as they pause to remember Postville."

## GUTIERREZ: FIVE YEARS SINCE POSTVILLE, IOWA IMMIGRATION RAID AND THE "IMAGE STILL HAUNTS AND INSPIRES ME"

May 6, 2013 Issues: Immigration

Gutierrez: "Five years after Postville, we still need a legal immigration system that works and we still need labor rights and legalization extended to vulnerable workers like those who worked the line in the plant that day."

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL), a long-time champion of immigration reform who is part of a bipartisan working group in the House of Representatives crafting immigration reform legislation, commented on the pending fifth anniversary of one of the most horrific immigration raids in American history. On May 12, 2008, almost 1,000 Homeland Security agents in full SWAT battle gear, backed by helicopters and SUVs, swooped into a meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa. There, the federal agents arrested nearly 400 workers and processed them in groups at the nearby National Cattle Congress for deportation. In so doing, hundreds of families with children were split apart, workers in an abusive meat packing plant were punished, and the small town of Postville was completely and permanently turned on its head.

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Rep. Gutierrez led a delegation of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to Postville in July 2008 that included then Chairman of the CHC Joe Baca (D-CA) and several other Members.

Commemoration ceremonies to mark the fifth anniversary are scheduled in Cedar Rapids, Iowa for May 10, 2013, beginning with a noon remembrance in front of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Iowa (111 7th Ave. SE), followed by a "Walk for Justice" at 12:30 p.m. to Immaculate Conception Church (857 3rd Ave. SE) and a interfaith prayer service at 1:15 p.m. Contact Rockne Cole or Sr. Mary McCauley, BVM for more information. [Because of a scheduling conflict, Rep. Gutierrez will not be able to attend the fifth anniversary events.]

The feature length documentary *abUsed: The Postville Raid*, by producer/director Luis Argueta will air nationally on PBS's *America Reframed* on May 12, 2013.

In all, 389 workers were arrested on May 12, 2008 at AgriProcessors, the kosher meat packing plant in Postville. Charges against the company ranged from violations of child labor laws, sexual harassment and assault, identity theft,

violations of health and safety laws, and conspiracy to violate immigration laws, but the workers bore the brunt of the prosecution. Some immigrant workers who were victims of abuse and child labor violations, and who collaborated with law enforcement, were granted U visas. The majority were deported, and many others who had not been arrested fled, only to be replaced by new immigrant workers. In the end, only one executive of the plant went to jail – for unrelated bank fraud charges - and the company itself went bankrupt until the plant reopened under new management.

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"In 2013, we still need a legal immigration system that works and we still need labor rights and legalization extended to vulnerable workers like those who worked the line in the plant that day," Rep. Gutierrez said. "Reforming immigration is within reach this year and it is the only way we establish law and order, the only way we stabilize the economy in some communities, and the only way we respect the human rights and dignity of immigrants. I hope people are reminded of the cost of inaction as they pause to remember Postville."

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Additional resources related to Postville and the fifth anniversary of the raid:

Postville Remembrance Website (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service):

[www.lirs.org/postville-anniversary](http://www.lirs.org/postville-anniversary)

Sister Mary McCauley, BVM, Dubuque, Iowa (563-583-8989, [mmccauley@bvmcong.org](mailto:mmccauley@bvmcong.org)) [Sister Mary was the pastoral administrator at St. Bridget's in Postville at the time of the raid.]

Reverend Greg Bahl, Current Pastor of St. Bridget's in Postville ([dbq134@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us](mailto:dbq134@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us))

David Vásquez, Campus Pastor, Office for College Ministries, Luther College, Decorah, IA ([vasqda01@luther.edu](mailto:vasqda01@luther.edu))

June 2008 account of Erik Camayd-Freixas, Florida International University, published in the New York Times: "Interpreting After the Largest ICE Raid in US History: A Personal Account"

(<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/national/20080711IMMIG.pdf>)