



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
February 11, 2005

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**Statement of Support from FIRM- a diverse nationwide grassroots immigrant rights coalition- on the introduction of the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2005, better known as AgJOBS**

(Washington, D.C) Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho) and Reps. Howard Berman (D-California) and Chris Cannon (R-Utah) today announced the introduction of the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2005, which would provide legal protections and better working conditions to immigrant workers. The Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) stands in strong support of this important legislation.

The introduction of AgJOBS is a significant step towards the needed comprehensive immigration reform laws in this country. The bill would streamline an existing temporary visa program for foreign agricultural workers and allow undocumented farm workers already in the United States to obtain visas. To do so, workers would have to prove that they had worked in agriculture for at least 100 days before August 2003. Farm workers, who in a period of six years work at least 360 days in agriculture, could then qualify for permanent residence and eventually citizenship.

This strong bipartisan bill stands in sharp contrast to President Bush's plan to create a massive guest worker program. Although the President acknowledges that our immigration system is broken and needs to be fixed, his proposal falls short of what is really needed. His guest worker plan does not provide a path to legalization for hard working immigrants. This year, President Bush could demonstrate his leadership and honest intentions for immigration reform by supporting the AgJOBS bill (S.359) and the DREAM Act, two bills with strong bipartisan support.

Immigration reform is desperately needed. The AgJOBS bill is an important step and a beacon of hope for millions of people who deserve a safe and fair immigration system. FIRM stands ready to work with Members of Congress and the President to make sure that real reforms are enacted in the coming years.

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*FIRM (Fair Immigration Reform Movement) is a coalition of grassroots community organizations nationwide, including statewide immigrant rights coalitions, organizing networks, faith-based groups, and low-income and other networks organized around ethnicity or national origin organizations, working on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform and immigrant rights. FIRM is convened by the Center for Community Change.*