IMMIGRANTS AND THE MILITARY

Documented immigrants (those here with green cards) are a major target of military recruiters, armed with promises (sometimes hard to get fulfilled) of immediate citizenship­ along with all the other types of misinformation that military recruiters use to sell youth on enlisting in the military. Both documented and undocumented immigrant males should register with Selective Service when they turn 18, as failure to do so is against the law and could be grounds to deny citizenship in the future. Leave the Social Security number space blank if you do not have a number.

Undocumented immigrants cannot legally enlist in the military so don't believe a recruiter who says otherwise.

**IMMIGRATION REFORM: Comprehensive Immigration Reform:**

Currently the US Congress is not working toward Comprehensive Immigration Reform. So it is not clear what would be in such a bill and hence what impact that Reform would have on immigrants and the military.

**IMMIGRATION REFORM: The Dream Act**

*It’s a long time dream: a path to citizenship, but there are some problems with it*

Comprehensive immigration reform is what is needed. Until that happens the DREAM Act could be one step in that direction. In December 2010, passage seemed close when the House of Representatives passed this Act. But, to bitter disappointment, the Senate did not.

**What is the DREAM Act:**

The DREAM Act would have provided a path to documentation and citizenship for those students whose parents brought them to the United States some years earlier, who earn a high school diploma and then complete at least 2 years of college or military service and meet some other criteria. In the version passed by the House of Representatives, 2 years of trade school education also would qualify. Hopefully when a DREAM Act finally passes in Congress, trade school will be included.

In March, 2013, the Oregon Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law that undocumented youth who graduate from an Oregon high school and meet the Dream Act criteria are now eligible for in-state tuition at Oregon universities.

**Positives:**

This Act is what many are dreaming of. Without passage of this Act, undocumented youth will continue not to be able to get driver’s licenses, even to safely hold a job. Their situation is desperate; passing this Act would give talented immigrant youth a future as productive members of the community.

**Negatives:**

Undocumented youth would become vulnerable targets of military recruiters who have a long history of telling only part of the facts about military life to prospective enlistees. Latinos, underrepresented in the military traditionally, are already a targeted group by military recruiters. The DREAM Act would give the recruiters easy access to exactly the population they are most interested in: high school graduates who believe they have no other avenue to a financially secure and full life and who may often be most vulnerable to the belief that military enlistment is the only or best way to show patriotism. Currently undocumented immigrants cannot legally be enlisted in the military, only documented immigrants and citizens can, legally, join the military. Further enlistment is the military is an eight year commitment, not the two years specified in this Act, a distinction that could be misleading to “dreamers.”

**Suggested Action:**

Inform yourself and Latino youth about all the facts about military enlistment. For some youth joining the military is an option, but only if they are fully informed so that they can make an informed choice, having explored all their options, between college or other education and military enlistment.

While our local elected officials (Senators Merkley & Wyden and Representative DeFazio) all voted for passage of the DREAM Act in 2010 and would likely vote so again, messages of support should urge inclusion of trade school as an additional option, as an alternative route to legalization, in addition to college or the military.