



# **SOMOS UN PUEBLO UNIDO**

**May 2009 Newsletter**

## **May Day 2009 to usher in changes for New Mexico's Workers**

*Somos* admires and applauds the efforts of the workers in New Mexico who sustain this economy everyday and who courageously fight for better working conditions and just immigration reform. Despite the difficult realities of the economy, there is some good news to share on this International Workers Day. Federal legislation to make it easier for workers to unionize in their workplace is growing in support. Our state legislature passed a law to protect workers against wage theft. And there's real hope for legalization and immigration reform this year. Thanks to all the workers and activists who make these things happen. *¡Adelante!*

## **Remembering the history of May 1<sup>st</sup>**

Although it has been traditionally celebrated by workers and unions in countries other than the United States, International Workers Day observes an important and tragic moment in the history of the US labor movement, the Haymarket Massacre. In 1886, police killed at least a dozen demonstrators in Chicago who were involved in a general strike for the eight-hour day, a strike led by immigrant and non-immigrant laborers. The immigrants' rights movement has retaken this holiday in the United States and continues to hold marches, vigils and demonstrations around the country to support legalization for immigrant workers and their families.

## **New Mexico workers win protections against wage theft**

On March 6th, Governor Bill Richardson signed House Bill 489 sponsored by Representative Miguel García (Dist. 14-Bernalillo). HB 489 provides stronger protections for workers who file claims for unpaid wages and overtime and penalizes the employers who steal from them. *Somos* spearheaded this campaign with the support of faith and labor organizations throughout New Mexico. It protects workers against any retaliation if they try to recuperate stolen wages and it requires employers to pay triple damages to the worker from whom they've stolen. If you feel you are not being paid your wages, the minimum wage or overtime, call *Somos* to get information about how you can recover the money you're owed.

## **Another legislative victory banning racial profiling**

*Somos* members also worked with the NAACP and the Drug Policy Alliance to help make New Mexico the 23<sup>rd</sup> state to ban racial profiling and other forms of bias based policing. Among other things, House Bill 428 will protect people against disparate treatment by police based on race, national origin and language. It also calls for all local agencies to create racial profiling policy and training.

## **Support the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA)**

The Employee Free Choice Act, supported by a bipartisan coalition in the United States Congress, would enable workers in New Mexico and throughout the country to organize for better benefits, wages and working conditions by restoring workers' freedom to choose for themselves whether to join a union.

EFCA would:

- \* Remove current obstacles to employees who want collective bargaining
- \* Guarantee that workers who can choose collective bargaining are able to get a contract
- \* Allow employees to form unions by signing cards authorizing union representation

For more information about how you can support local campaign for EFCA go to the New Mexico Federation of Labor's website: [http://nmfl.org/statements\\_from\\_afl.htm](http://nmfl.org/statements_from_afl.htm) or call Isidoro Herrera at 362-0600. You could also call Senator Jeff Bingaman at 202-224-5521 in support of the EFCA.

## **Visit *Somos*' website now!**

*Somos*' invites you to visit our new and improved bilingual website: <http://www.somosunpueblounido.org>

There you can easily find information about immigration reform, immigrants' rights, upcoming events, action alerts and more.

## **You can support immigration reform today**

According to a New York Times article, President Barack Obama will address the nation this month about passing an immigration reform this year! What are Somos' members doing in support of the immigration reform?

*Somos'* members met with all three congressmen during their April recess in New Mexico before going back to Washington, D.C. to discuss immigration reform and the DREAM Act, a bill that would help legalize undocumented students. During the month of May, *Somos* members are going to be giving presentations and gathering support from the churches and faith groups. If you would like for *Somos* to go to your church, please, call *Somos* at 505-424-7832.

## **How can you help?**

Join *Somos* and the FIRM Cellphone Action Network to be the first to know when a bill for immigration reform is introduced and to receive action alerts, news and updates to push back against anti immigrant activists:

**Step One:** Text the word "justice" to 69866 (or "justicia" for alerts in Spanish)

**Step Two:** Reply to the first text message with your zip code and email.

You'll receive about one message every week about events in your area and ways to support our movement. (All standard texting fees apply)

For more information and to find your NM congressman's contact phone numbers, visit

[www.somosunpueblounido.org](http://www.somosunpueblounido.org)

## **In Other National News...**

### **2009 Pulitzer Prize Winners**

The Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting was awarded to Ryan Gabrielson and Paul Giblin of the East Valley Tribune, Mesa, Ariz., for their coverage on how Sheriff Joe Arpaio's focus on immigration enforcement harmed the investigation of violent crime and other aspects of public safety. To read the winners' report series, go to [http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/page/reasonable\\_doubt](http://www.eastvalleytribune.com/page/reasonable_doubt)

### **DREAM Act gains surprising ally**

USA Today reported in April that a group of colleges and universities is urging Congress to give undocumented immigrants tuition aid and a path to citizenship in light of efforts in several states to block them.

The College Board, made up of 5,000 schools and best known for its SAT college admission tests, released a report April 21<sup>st</sup> that cites a need for federal legislation that would open up in-state college tuition, financial aid and legal status to undocumented students in the United States.

To read more about the USA Today report, go to [http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-04-21-college-board-immigrants\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-04-21-college-board-immigrants_N.htm)

### **Under Siege: Low-Wage Latino Workers Face Injustice in the South**

The Southern Poverty Law Center released a report detailing the injustice and abuse facing low-wage Latino workers in the South. The report finds that in Southern states Latinos are cheated out of wages, subjected to inhumane conditions, subjected to racial profiling and are regularly harassed by law enforcement.

To read the report, go to <http://www.splcenter.org/legal/undersiege/index.jsp>