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## ■ NEBRASKA NEWS

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**ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: Rally Decries LB48**

*Urges federal reform that favors a "legal way forward" for existing illegals*

By Samuel McKewon

January 28, 2011



SAMUEL MCKEWON/STATEPAPER

Signs were aplenty at UNITY rally against LB48.

at least three times that in supporters.

Nine speakers argued [LB48](#) – which gives [law enforcement broad powers](#) to question and detain suspected illegal immigrants – is a dangerous “unfunded mandate” that implicitly endorses racial profiling and discrimination.

“Arizona has seen enormous social and economic cost,” said Darcy Tromanhauser of Nebraska Appleseed, which organized the rally.

Said Mike Nolan of the Nebraska League of Municipalities: “We have real concerns about the potential risk exposure it could create for Nebraska towns since they may not be covered by their insurance for lawsuits that could arise from this law.”

And Sister Kathleen Erickson of the Sisters of Mercy: “We need to look at a broken system.”

The Anti-Defamation League's Alan Potash argued illegal immigrants would decline to report crimes out of fear of questioning and deportation.

Frank LaMere, of Nebraska's Winnebago Tribe, tied LB48 to a larger narrative of ongoing struggles in Whiteclay and other forms of implicit racial discrimination.

Cheers accompanied many of the comments - frequently centered on bold-yet-vague calls for reform - that occasionally strayed off topic. A penitent-looking Abe Lincoln stared down on the rally, twice postponed in recent weeks because snowy weather wouldn't permit buses from Grand Island, Kearney and elsewhere to travel safely.

No such problems Thursday, an unseasonably warm, sunny winter afternoon. The Socialist Workers Party set up a desk in back to sell books on the Cuban Revolution and U.S. Imperialism. Lincoln Food Not Bombs arrived with some steaming crock pots. Students wearing backpacks, scarves, pullovers and stylish hats held their phones in the air for snapshots of speeches, then tucked them down to fire off a picture or text.

Later, more than 50 in the crowd went inside the Capitol to deliver roughly 6,000 postcards from constituents urging their state senators to block the passage of LB48.

It was a day for signs. Vibrant, colorful, mostly homemade – markers on construction paper, computer printouts. The usual rectangular shapes, but many sizes. Worn around necks. Held aloft. Draped like bunting across three or four bodies.

Held Thursday on the west steps of the State Capitol, the 45-minute UNITY rally decrying LB48 – an Arizona-style immigration reform bill that's been the talk of the Unicameral – drew at least 100 signs. At



SAMUEL MCKEWON/STATEPAPER

Lincolnite J Chan - originally from Brooklyn, N.Y. - holds a sign at Thursday's UNITY Rally

The message, muddled a bit in the speeches, was summed up as this: State solutions won't work. Especially this one.

"Nebraska values don't support an Arizona-style approach," Tromanhauser said.



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Federal reform might work, Tromanhauser said – provided it's the right kind.

"A system that actually works for our communities, doesn't tear apart families," she said.

So a big fence and mass deportation – would that be workable? It certainly would be federal reform.

"No," Tromanhauser said. "A workable system that lines up our needs and realities with a legal process."

Which is?

The UNITY rally was held on the West Steps of the State Capitol.

"A way forward to apply for legal status and also just creates a rational way of assessing our labor needs," Tromanhauser said.

So – amnesty? Tromanhauser repeatedly defaulted to "common sense" and "workable."

"There's no line to get into," Tromanhauser said. "No way to apply for legal status for those who don't already have family here or don't have high-skilled business visa."

And here a reporter pressed Tromanhauser again. Isn't this essentially amnesty? Couldn't a bright line be drawn to include just about every motive for wanting to emigrate to America? Is the desire for a better job – or the vaguely defined "better life" - enough?

"There are people who it makes sense to have here," Tromanhauser said. "Immigration is part of who we are as a country, right?"

When the feds tried – and failed - to address illegal immigration several years ago, Tromanhauser said, they considered creating a commission that would assess American work needs – and how unskilled workers from abroad could fill them. Such a program would at least create a legal way, she said, of immigration.

"Right now we're flying blind," she said. "We really need to have a system that matches reality."

And what would such a system say about the nations from which immigrants originate? That they're not good enough to live in?

"That's a good point," Tromanhauser said. "This is not a narrow issue. We need to be thinking which of our policies do we have control over that may be impacting the situations in other country. I don't just think it's a blinders-on, immigration reform is the only piece of this puzzle. But I do think that's a big piece of it."

See also: [Mike Johanns on Federal Reform, 'Anchor Babies?', 2010 Deportation Numbers](#)

- [NumbersUSA](#)
- [ImmigrationProCon](#)

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#### Arizona-style reform? Or a federal solution? And if so - what?

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