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## **Advocates point to need for reform**

### **RAID AFTERMATH: POLITICS**

**Chances of comprehensive change in immigration law look better in the wake of the fall elections, they say.**

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To many immigration advocates on Capitol Hill, the true message of this week's raids of Swift & Co. was for Congress: Comprehensive immigration reform is a must in 2007.

In a telephone news conference Thursday from Washington, D.C., pro-immigrant groups blasted the Department of Homeland Security's crackdown on illegal immigration in Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Texas, Colorado and Utah, saying it only underscored the inadequacy of the United States' current immigration and enforcement system.

"This is another shining example of how our system is broken," said John Gay, co-director of the Essential Worker Immigration Coalition and vice president of the National Restaurant Association.

History, the groups said, suggests the status quo returns in many places where such stings take place, while families are divided and economies suffer.

Gay and others did say, however, they were more optimistic since the November elections that Congress would reopen debate on a more comprehensive immigration bill - similar to one sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., that passed last year in the Senate.

Leaders in both the House and Senate have indicated that immigration will be a top priority, and that a bill providing a path to citizenship for immigrants in addition to border security will probably be considered. However, opposition is expected to continue from lawmakers who do not believe in granting what they consider "amnesty" to illegal immigrants, as well as those who wish to emphasize border security.

Cecelia Munoz, vice president of the National Council of La Raza, a Latino civil rights organization, said the elections proved that hard-line stances were out of vogue with voters, noting the losses of congressional candidates in key immigration states like Texas.

What is happening to working immigrant families in Marshalltown, she said, reverberates with Latino voters and businesses, which have long complained they need a more effective way of screening for legal workers, she said.

"The pain of these families is very real, and it's very vivid," said Munoz. "It's one of the reasons we have such an urgency about passing something that works."

Deborah Meyers, a senior policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, D.C., said she agrees that reform is more likely next year, but any overhaul of the system affecting roughly 12 million unauthorized immigrants will still be controversial.

"Democrats may feel some internal divisions like the Republicans did last year," she said.

If the House, which focused primarily on enforcement last year, intends to "get serious" about changing a system forged largely in the 1950s and '60s, it will have to address the legal channels necessary for immigrants to obtain work, the slowness of the immigration process and workplace enforcement, Meyers said.

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