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King wants Swift to pledge to use only legal workers

RAID AFTERMATH: POLITICS

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Washington, D.C. - Iowa's most outspoken congressman when it comes to immigration policy said that this week's raids at Swift & Co. packing plants may slow down the flow of people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally to find jobs.

Rep. Steve King, a Kiron Republican, also said he wants to see Swift pledge to the federal government that it will employ a completely legal work force. Meatpacking companies that hire cheaper labor provided by undocumented immigrants compete unfairly with other companies, he said.

King said that "of course" Swift is capable of having a completely legal work force. Swift officials say the company has done all it can do to verify the legality of its workers.

"There are 6.9 million illegal workers in America, and there are 69 million Americans out of the work force," King said. The legal workers may not all be in the right place or have the right skills, but the marketplace can adjust, in part with higher wages offered, King said.

People who do not have jobs and who are not seeking jobs are counted as "out of the work force" by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Advocates for immigrants have criticized the government for detaining parents who left behind children in Tuesday's action, and King said it's possible some of those children are American citizens and should be cared for as citizens.

King also rejected allegations that those detained were treated inhumanely.

Little has been said about the toll the raids took on livestock packed into trucks and awaiting slaughter on the day of the raids, King added. It was fortunate temperatures were not high, he said. "I will be talking to ICE to make sure they are sensitive to the product of our producers," he said.