

**Statement from Arturo S. Rodriguez, President
United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO
Reintroduction of the AgJobs bill
February 10, 2005—Washington, D.C.**

The need is great for Congress and President Bush to enact the AgJobs bill this year.

We need to end the fear and help improve the lives of the immigrant farm workers whose sweat and sacrifice bring the rich bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables to our tables.

They do the hardest, most difficult jobs other workers won't do, pay taxes but enjoy few, if any, benefits while performing some of the most important work in our nation—feeding America and much of the world.

At a recent news conference the President said, "I know there is a compassionate, humane way to deal with this issue. I want to remind people that family values do not end at the Rio Grande." Mr. Bush added that he is seeking "a program that enables people to come into our country in a legal way...for jobs that Americans won't do."

AgJobs includes all of these basic principals. It is *hard-earned* legalization.

With broad bipartisan support, it is a comprehensive bill negotiated by the United Farm Workers and the agricultural industry over a four-year period.

It is backed by more than 400 organizations, including business, labor, religious, Latino and immigrant rights groups.

AgJobs means:

- Undocumented farm workers *earning* the right to permanently stay in this country by continuing to work in agriculture.
- Protections for workers' labor rights, including decent pay, working conditions and protections from abuse.
- Encouraging families to stay together and fully participate in the society they help feed.

The President said, "People are coming to our country to do jobs that Americans won't do, to be able to feed their families. And I think there's a humane way to recognize that, and at the same time protect our borders."

Yes there *is* a humane way. But as last month's editorial in the *Miami Herald* put it, "President Bush has to do more than talk the talk. His first step should be to support the AgJobs bill, which would do exactly what he described."

If the farm workers and the agricultural industry can put aside decades of often bitter differences to agree on AgJobs *surely* Congress and the President can do the same in the interest of the nation as well as the men and women who help feed it.

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