

El Centro, Inc.

April 10, 2007

CONTACT: Melinda Lewis, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Research
913-677-0100, ext. 212 or mlewis@ElCentroInc.com

April 14, 2007 2PM, St. Mary Parish Gymnasium, 509 St. John Street, Garden City, KS

Community Calls for Comprehensive Immigration Reform Residents Gather to Discuss Proposals for Reform and Press Congress to Act

Garden City, KS--On Saturday, April 14, 2007 at 2PM, Garden City immigrants and allies will gather to learn more about pending legislation in Congress to comprehensively address our nation's broken immigration system. After discussing the need for family reunification, an earned path to citizenship for immigrant workers, humane and effective border and interior enforcement, a fair worker program to meet the country's current and future labor market needs, and integration strategies that promote English and citizenship, participants will take action.

"Too much of the discussion around immigration focuses on symptoms of the problem. Families are separated for decades because of long backlogs. Hard-working immigrants, essential to our economy, live in the shadows and have no way to earn citizenship. Honest employers have trouble legally hiring needed workers, especially in our agricultural industry. Our borders are chaotic, and we pour more and more money into enforcement that yields few results. And our community lacks resources to help newcomers learn English, naturalize, and become full participants in our society. Garden Citians see all of this and are understandably frustrated. Today, we have a message of hope for our neighbors and of urgency for our Congressional delegation. We CAN comprehensively fix our immigration system, and we MUST fix it now," said Sister Janice Thome of the Ministry of Presence in Garden City, Kansas.

The Garden City forum is part of a national campaign for comprehensive immigration reform, a campaign supported by a strong coalition of faith organizations, business groups, immigrant advocates, civil rights organizations, and others. "Garden City has a long tradition of immigration, and immigrants have helped to build the vibrant, healthy community we enjoy today. We know that today's immigrants, just like my family, just want a chance to give back to this country that has given us so much. Comprehensive immigration reform gives them that chance and helps to ensure that immigration keeps working for America as it has since the beginning of our country," stated Janie Perkins, former Garden City mayor and speaker at Saturday's forum.

Melinda Lewis, Director of Policy Advocacy and Research for El Centro, Inc. in Kansas City, Kansas and member of the Strategy Council for the Campaign for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, will provide an overview of reform proposals in Congress, answer questions about the legislation and the likelihood of passage, and assist community members in taking action to send messages to Congress. Garden City immigrants, employers, and community leaders will also tell their stories as testimony to the need for reform. "Immigration is an issue in communities around Kansas, and Garden City will be a critical part of the campaign for change. I look forward to hearing from Garden Citians and to taking our conversation about the urgent need for reform to our members of Congress," said Lewis.

###