

Testimony/Public Comment on ADL Opposition to the SAVE Act

As you know, the Anti-Defamation League has been fighting hatred and bigotry for over 90 years. As an organization with unique expertise and perspective in the civil rights and law enforcement areas, ADL actively advocates for a comprehensive approach to immigration reform that will serve America's security, humanitarian and economic interests. The Secure America through Verification and Enforcement Act – otherwise known as the SAVE Act – flies in the face of these efforts. This legislation will play an unproductive and damaging role in addressing our country's broken immigration system.

In order to be effective, immigration reform must go beyond the “deportation only” approach which the SAVE Act embraces. Focusing exclusively on enforcement is largely responsible for the crisis we find ourselves faced with today. We must find a way to craft legislation which combines tough enforcement with practical and realistic solutions for undocumented workers and their families.

The SAVE Act masquerades as an economy-improving measure. In reality, this legislation relies on utilizing an employment verification system that is deeply flawed and can lead to discrimination, profiling and the intrusion of privacy against not only undocumented immigrants, but also U.S. citizens and legal immigrants.

Additionally, we are gravely concerned about the effect that the SAVE Act will have on the ability of local law enforcement to work closely with the community to ensure their safety. Enforcement of immigration laws has traditionally been the sole purview of the federal government. The failure of comprehensive immigration reform, however, has galvanized legislators to pass amendments

that empower local police to enforce immigration law. At first blush, this may sound like a good idea. If you scratch beneath the surface, however, you realize that shifting responsibility from the federal agents to local ones gravely interferes with the ability of local law enforcement to work in partnership with the community. Out of status persons and their families will be reluctant to seek police protection, report crimes or serve as witnesses if they fear they will be deported for doing so. This, in turn, will make it exceptionally difficult for local law enforcement to address complex problems like hate crimes and domestic violence – for which close cooperation with law enforcement is critical.

The SAVE Act continues our country’s pattern of passing short-sighted band-aid solutions for a problem that desperately needs a comprehensive solution. By passing the resolution to oppose the SAVE Act, you send a strong message that communities are ready for a comprehensive and lasting solution. The Anti-Defamation League is working hard to send this message in Washington DC and across the 30 regions we serve. We in Los Angeles believe this city should lead the nation in the fight for immigrant rights and fair treatment.

Thank you.