

RYAN STARK LILIENTHAL

LAW OFFICES

Join the Vote

By Ryan Stark Lilienthal

For immigrants who have become U.S. citizens, this is a call to action to register to vote immediately and to vote on November 2, 2004. For permanent residents, this is a call to action to apply for citizenship, now. Your family members, loved ones, friends and community need you to impact the future of immigration law by impacting the vote.

Over the past few years, elected officials at that national and state levels have produced laws that more strictly limit the lives and options of immigrants in the United States and New Jersey. This has happened at a time of unprecedented immigration growth. Recent census figures show that New Jersey's population would have shrunk if it were not for the states' immigrants. Given the growing number of immigrants, one would expect better, not worse immigration laws from our elected representatives.

In fact, there is a sense of helplessness in many communities when confronted by aggressive immigration-law enforcers. Under our current laws, passed by our elected officials, enforcement officers have wide latitude and powers to arrest and detain undocumented immigrants – especially those with outstanding deportation orders. While it may be too late to help many immigrants who have been detained or deported, immigrant communities have the capacity to make a difference for the future – but they must engage in the political process.

RYAN STARK LILIENTHAL

LAW OFFICES

Politicians pay attention to communities that vote. It is no wonder that immigrants serve as scapegoats for elected officials in times of trouble. Immigrants are easy to blame because the legal status of many prevents them from voting. This makes it all the more important for naturalized citizens to vote, and for permanent residents to naturalize.

In Trenton, alone, the census shows that at least one-quarter of the city's population is Hispanic. Experts believe that the real figure is closer to one-third. In the last election, only 9,000 of Trenton's 80,000 residents voted. Given these numbers, Trenton's immigrants who are eligible to vote can directly shape the make-up of city government by registering to vote and voting in large numbers. What's more, if Trenton's permanent resident population applied to naturalize today, they might be eligible to vote in the November 2005 election.

You may not be able to stop immigration enforcers from knocking on the door today, but you can vote replace their bosses with elected officials who offer opportunity for legal status rather than deportation.

To find out how to register to vote, and where to vote, contact the Mercer County at (609) ...