

Written by Ernesto M. Gange

Monday, 19 October 2009 13:15 - Last Updated Monday, 19 October 2009 13:37

Washington, DC – Filipino Americans from Pennsylvania joined with 5,000 of their Latin American cousins, Jews, Africans and other ethnic groups, in the "REFORM IMMIGRATION FOR AMERICA LOBBY DAY" in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 13, 2009. They appealed to President Barack Obama to redeem his promise of "fixing the immigration system is a critical component in fixing the economy." They delivered the same message to the members of the United States Congress. They believe that a comprehensive immigration reform will serve the best interest of the American people.

There are more-than 12-million undocumented immigrants in the USA today. It is necessary that this critical issue is addressed, to minimize if not stop the exploitation of the "illegal immigrants," which that is rampant. The undocumented immigrants are people, too, and they have to survive. It is practical that these immigrants are allowed to pay for their fair share that will help ease the burden on the part of the citizens who pay their taxes. The majority of the immigrants works hard to find a better place for their children to grow, and, live the life of a free man, guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, a right that many of them they did not get in their old country.

The mission of the Pennsylvania delegation was to understand the sentiments of the Pennsylvania

members of Congress, and to seek their support for the current Immigration Reform Bill. Ali Kronley, PA State Director for "Reform Immigration for America

," led the delegation. They visited the offices of Pennsylvania Senators Arlen Specter and Robert Casey Jr., in the US Senate, and Congresspersons Sestak, Fattah, Schwartz, Dahlkemper, Dent, Pitts, Thompson, Brady and Murphy of Bucks county. They divided themselves into five 10-person teams and proceeded with their visits from

11:00 a.m.

to

2:00 p.m.

They were able to talk with the Congressional staff members, who listened and answered their questions, an experience that they will remember as "Citizen Lobbyists for a day," and they all

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went back to the Church of the Reformation, where they reassembled.

The Faith Leaders prayed with the volunteers and lead the procession from the Church of the Reformation to the West Lawn of the US Capitol Building. The contingents from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Georgia, Florida, Michigan, Illinois, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia. Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts were very peaceful, although, the chanted both in Spanish and in English, but, everybody who participated was disciplined and well behaved.

The vigil at the West Lawn started with a prayer and a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States, followed by family testimonies, and they were joined by the members of the United States Congress who addressed the participants. Leaders from different groups were given the opportunity to address the crowd, and the event ended with a Commitment to Action, which was led by the Faith Leaders. Most of the participants traveled to Washington via land transportation because they did not want to be noticed by the Airport Security details.

Although they were tired as they drove back to their respective states, they are happy that they had the chance to be heard. They hoped also that they would be given a second chance to live and work in the land of the free and the home of the brave, the United States of America. ###

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E ditor's Notes: Ernesto M. Gange is the venerable Filipino-American community leader of Pennsylvania

. He is a member of the Bucks County Human Relations Council, the founding chair of the International Network of Filipinos Overseas and the chairman of the the Amerasian Committee. He was also the first Filipino-American member of the Board of Trustees of the Pearl S. Buck International (Foundation) and a former commissioner of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC), where he chaired its Asian-American Caucus. Apo Ernie, as his friends fondly call him, has been asked lately to chair the budding "American-Filipino Public-Affairs Council," which is being formed by some community leaders in the West Coast and the Eastern Seaboard.

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