



Taking a Stand On Political Nominee Was Right

JEFFERSON CITY — My highly publicized opposition in recent days to the nomination of governor-designee Linda Martinez to head the Missouri Department of Economic Development was precipitated by my own legitimate worries over her views on illegal immigration and by a flood of protest from constituents in the 2nd District. In Senate floor debate over her appointment on Feb. 5, I made it very clear that — because of Ms. Martinez’s controversial record on illegal immigration — I could not support her nomination unless I received written assurances from the governor’s office that she would do all in her power to protect Missouri jobs for legal residents and faithfully comply with and uphold the state’s illegal immigration laws.

Ms. Martinez’s views on illegal immigration and her legal work to protect illegal workers were cause for great concern to me and many of my constituents. In 2006, Ms. Martinez performed pro bono legal work and led the fight to repeal passed city ordinances in Valley Park that included penalties for local businesses hiring illegal workers. At about the same time, she also appeared on national television and expressed her view that the control of illegal immigration in the U.S. lies solely with the federal government and not with cities or states. Because of her track record on the issue — and because the governor had campaigned against illegal immigration — ambiguity existed, and I believed there was more than sufficient reason to request clarification and more information about Ms. Martinez’s nomination. Further, our District has suffered from illegal immigration abuses in the past — twice in O’Fallon when state tax credits were awarded to businesses that hired illegal workers and took away jobs from Missouri workers. Since the Department of Economic Development is the grantor of such state tax credits, my constituents and I were very concerned about a potential conflict of interest and were very wary of being burned again with the loss of jobs to illegal workers.

As the author of last year’s illegal immigration reforms in Missouri — and in my duty as a state senator — it was my responsibility to make absolutely certain that Ms. Martinez could perform the duties of the state’s vital economic development agency irrespective of any personal views on illegal immigration. That’s why I asked for assurances from the governor’s office that she would fight to protect American jobs for Missourians, uphold the rule of law on this controversial issue, and to the best of her ability carry out those directives. I believe Ms. Martinez intended to follow through with my request and to answer my

inquiries, but was thwarted by the governor's office, which I believe acted shamefully during this confirmation process with veiled threats and strong-arm tactics to my simple, fair, and lawful inquiry.

When the vote on Ms. Martinez's nomination was taken on Feb. 10, several of my fellow senators and I voted "no" to the nomination because we never received *any* assurances from the governor or Ms. Martinez to clear up these ambiguities. As I told my Senate colleagues and many others, this was never about Ms. Martinez's qualifications or her personally, but about questions regarding her diverging political views. Sadly, the governor's office refused to clarify its position on illegal immigration.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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