

Protesters demand action on immigration reform; D.C. police divert traffic, make no arrests after activists block streets

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Body

About 150 **activists** gathered Tuesday in front of U.S. **Immigration** and Customs Enforcement headquarters to deliver a "State of the Union" address that protested what they consider a lack of progress on **immigration reform**.

Holding signs and loudspeakers at a noon rally, the group of community organizers, advocates and faith leaders chanted "Si, se puede" ("Yes, we can") before about 20 of them joined hands across 12th **Street** SW near Maryland Avenue, **blocking traffic**. They sat on the road and waited for **police** to bring out their handcuffs.

"We want to bring attention to the lack of movement on **immigration reform**," said Gustavo Torres, executive director of CASA de Maryland, one of the organizing groups.

Citing President Obama's promises to pursue **immigration reform** in the first year of his administration, he said: "We were very excited, because the great majority of the Latino community said: 'Finally, we have a president who looks like us, and he's going to fight for us.' . . .

"We want to let him know that if there's **no reforms**, he's not going to be reelected. The Latino community and the immigrant community are not going to believe him."

The protest did not cause as much disruption as organizers had hoped. The **police** stood to the side, chatting, their cars parked on 12th **Street**. **Traffic** had been redirected to avoid the intersection.

"We hear they're going to **arrest** us," Torres said.

By 1 p.m., it became clear that they would not.

Organizers decided to move two **blocks** north, to the more heavily traveled Independence Avenue, where **blocking** the **street** might be taken more seriously. But **no** sooner had the human chain occupied the new location than **traffic** was redirected again. Department of Agriculture employees stood behind windows to watch the **protesters** beat on plastic paint buckets and march in a tight circle.

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The **protesters** called on the Obama administration to immediately suspend deportations of immigrants with family members who are U.S. citizens and to pass the comprehensive **immigration reform** that they said Obama promised during his campaign.

Matthew Chandler, a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security, said the Obama administration is "committed to confronting this problem in practical, effective ways, using the current tools at our disposal, while we work with Congress to enact comprehensive **reform**."

Hugo Rodas, 40, a Gainesboro resident from Guatemala, said he has had trouble finding construction work because he has **no** papers. "I'm here to ask for work," he said. "I want a better life."

About 2 p.m., the **police** picked up the seated **protesters** one by one and led them to the sidewalk, according to one **activist**, who added that **no** one was **arrested**.

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