

VICENTE FOX CALLS FOR UNITED STATES TO LEGALIZE IMMIGRANTS; MEXICAN PRESIDENT ALSO WANTS ACCESS TO EDUCATION EXPANDED

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Body

Mexican President Vicente Fox said Tuesday he wants legalization for undocumented immigrants in the United States and easier access to higher education and drivers' licenses for Mexican workers who have crossed the border.

"Our goal is to legalize migrant flows between our two countries," Fox said in a speech at the National Council of La Raza meeting in Milwaukee.

The Mexican president said he wants "to lend greater security and orderliness to the migrant flows between Mexico and the United States."

Fox's comments came following news that the Bush administration is weighing a plan to grant amnesty to up to 3 million Mexicans living illegally in the United States.

Fox outlined several points for a potential Mexican-American agreement on immigration issues that would go further than just granting legal status to illegal immigrants.

In addition to that, he also called for:

n Unclogging legal channels for migrants coming to the United States by exempting Mexico and Canada from some limits on immigration.

n Giving Mexican workers expanded opportunities to obtain temporary work visas, so they can enter the United States safely and legally.

n Allowing Mexican workers, regardless of legal status, access to drivers' licenses and university educations.

n Fueling economic growth in Mexico, thereby reducing the number of people who feel compelled to cross the border.

"We must work hard to create opportunities for our fellow Mexicans to stay," Fox said.

Fox got a standing ovation as he entered a packed ballroom and spoke to an audience of about 2,300 people, some of whom waived Mexican flags.

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In the past, the **Fox** administration has been vague on the issue of **legalizing immigrants** living and working in the **United States**, said Cecilia Munoz, La Raza's vice **president** for policy.

"Today he **stated** very clearly they support it," Munoz said. "The community's very excited about the promise of an agreement between the U.S. and Mexico that could include a **legalization** program."

On **legalization**, **Fox** said that such a program would "allow **immigrants** who work hard, pay taxes and abide by the law to be treated equally and to travel freely."

Cecilia Hemmerlein of Milwaukee said she liked what she heard.

"He says act now to make everything better rather than wait for tomorrow," said Hemmerlein, a native of Mexico City.

Fox's speech came after one by U.S. Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, who praised La Raza, an umbrella group of Hispanic community and advocacy organizations, for defending **immigrants**.

The La Raza meeting was **Fox**'s last big stop on a five-day visit to the **United States** that included appearances in Detroit and Chicago. He is expected to return for a meeting with **President** Bush in September.

Graphic

Photo: Associated Press

Mexico's **President Vicente Fox** waves to the crowd Tuesday as he is introduced at the National Council of LaRaza annual conference in Milwaukee.

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