

Immigrant Action Day attracts 400 people

THELMA GUERRERO-HUSTON Statesman Journal
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Wanting to send a message to the Obama administration and Congress about the need for comprehensive changes to the nation's immigration system, more than 400 people showed up Saturday to Immigrant Action Day at Chemeketa Community College in Salem.

The number is the largest since the event began 12 years ago, said Francisco López. "We usually see about 100 to 200 people. I think this year's number is a strong message that many people want comprehensive immigration reform."

López is the director of the Salem-based CAUSA, an immigrant-advocacy group and co-sponsor of Immigrant Action Day. The event also is sponsored by LUS Chemeketa Community College Chapter. LUS is an acronym for Latinos Unidos Siempre.

Protesting the event were about 25 to 30 members of the Oregon Chapter of the Minutemen and Oregonians for Immigration Reform. An e-mail written to those members and forwarded to the Statesman Journal by OFIR vice president Rick Hickey about the groups' plans to protest the event read in part: "This is all about helping illegal aliens. Your college and your legislators are harboring, assisting and using your tax dollars to enable Illegal aliens. This is wrong, and you should let them know that."

The protest was without incident, said CCC public safety manager Bill Kohlmeyer. To ensure it remained peaceful, Kohlmeyer had several campus officers on hand.

"Marion County deputies were also around, so we didn't encounter any problems," Kohlmeyer said.

Salem's Immigrant Action Day included talks by state representatives, state employees and leaders of Latino groups.

State Rep. Terry Beyer, D-Springfield, told the audience that she would back a "state resolution in support of comprehensive immigration reform."

Maria Ceja of Salem stood in a long line of people waiting to ask Salem immigration lawyers Barbara Ghio and her husband, Kurt Muntz, questions related to immigrant rights.

"I want to see if she can recommend an attorney my daughter can go to that won't cost as much as the \$4,000 one attorney wants to charge her," Ceja said.

For the third consecutive year, Anastasia Linder Hernandez-Vasquez drove to Salem from Hillsboro to attend the gathering.



Timothy J. Gonzalez | Statesman Journal
Participants conclude the Immigrant Action Day activities Saturday with the CAUSA chant at Chemeketa Community College.

Discussion

Other discussions during Immigrant Action Day included the effect of stricter driver's license rules on immigrants; information on civil and legal rights; plans for an immigration rally in May on the steps of the state Capitol; and an update on preparations for immigrant-advocacy day at the federal level.

"I come here every year for Immigrant Action Day to show my support for immigrants and all people who live in our nation," the migrant health care worker said.

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