



Press Release

For more information, please contact:

Ferzana Hashmi

Office: 515-699-8520

Email: ferzana@hashmilawfirm.com

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

“Find a Legal Way to Immigrate” Immigration Game: A matter of Education and Social Responsibility

DES MOINES, IA, July 19, 2007 - The Hashmi Law Firm, P.L.C. along with AFSC Immigrants Voice Program will host a life-sized board game created by Ferzana Hashmi called “Find a Legal Way to Immigrate.” The game will be part of a community-building exercise developed to educate Americans about the struggles families face when confronting current U.S. immigration laws while trying to reunite in a lawful manner. The game’s goal is to encourage rational dialogue on immigration reform. It will simulate real-life situations that result from broken immigration laws and will be complete with a life-like jail and graveyard.

The “Find a Legal Way to Immigrate” game was created by Hashmi, an immigration attorney practicing in Des Moines, IA and a diversity management instructor at the College of Business, Iowa State University, in response to the “Find the Illegal Immigrant” game played by New York University’s College Republicans group. NYU’s game took place on February 22 in the bohemian Washington Square Park in New York City, home of Lady Liberty and Ellis Island, the starting point of many of America’s oldest and newest immigrant groups alike. The “cat and mouse” NYU game invited student players to act as immigration officers and try to find a student wearing an “illegal immigrant” sign; offering a very limited view of complex and far reaching laws. While the stated objective of the NYU game was to “spark debate” on immigration, the game has instead fostered anti-immigrant, racist and xenophobic sentiments, throwing gasoline on the already volatile issue of immigration reform. The NYU game has spread like wildfire to university campuses across the United States, including the University of Iowa and ivy-league University of Pennsylvania, influencing the way in which the nation’s youth think about both immigrants and immigration.

Given the importance of Iowa in determining the slate of presidential candidates for which the rest of the country votes, it came as a surprise to some that immigration is one of the top three concerns for the upcoming 2008 race in Iowa (Republican Senator John McCain from Arizona). Iowans and all Americans deserve even-handed, balanced and useful information so they can make educated decisions while voting in the future. The cornfields of Iowa are changing and immigration will play a major role in this transformation. These changes are evident in the wake of the largest raid in US immigration history which took place, in part, in Marshalltown, IA in December 2006. The collapse of immigration reform in Congress this summer only further highlights the need for public education on immigration, as numerous myths are prevalent.

The game is a free event open to the public and will be played at the Hashmi Law Firm, P.L.C.'s one year anniversary celebration barbeque on Saturday from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Pete Crivaro Park. The AFSC Immigrants Voice Program, co-sponsor of the event, has been at the forefront of immigrant rights advocacy work in Iowa and the Midwest, as directed by passionate and tireless community leader Sandra Sánchez. “Iowa’s workforce needs immigrants as baby-boomers retire. We need to be better educated on the issue and create a welcoming environment for everyone living in our state,” said Sánchez.

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MEDIA ALERT: Press conference is scheduled for 2:45 p.m. Saturday, July 21st at Pete Crivaro Park.