

Illegal immigrants to be held in former hotels

Those awaiting deportation would be confined according to risk level

WASHINGTON—Illegal immigrants awaiting deportation would be confined according to the risk they may pose under a new plan proposed Tuesday by the homeland security secretary.

Former hotels, nursing homes and other sites would be used to hold nonviolent, non-criminal immigrants as part of a larger plan to reform immigration detention. The alternative sites are intended to cut the costs of detaining immigrants, which reached nearly \$2 billion in 2008.

"We need to take what was a non-system and make it a system ... a decent system that meets standards of health and safety," Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said in detailing her plan Tuesday. "Ultimately, we want to get this right; it is not easy, but it is important work."

Currently, the federal immigration detention system uses a contractor network of local jails, prisons and other facilities to house on average 32,000 detainees a day. The amount of time in detention varies widely but most people are held for a little more than a month.

The plan is based on a review of immigration detention by Dora Schiro, Napolitano's former detention adviser. She resigned last month to become commissioner of New York City's jails.

Under the plan, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, part of the Homeland Security Department, will develop a way to classify immigrant detainees that will determine the facility where they are detained.

John Morton, head of ICE, will research the hotels and other venues where nonviolent, non-criminal immigrants could be held. The agency expects to save money by not putting everyone in local, state and government jails and prisons as they do now. (AP)

Poll: Public split on health overhaul legislation

Opposition among older Americans dropped 16 percentage points

WASHINGTON—Opposition to President Barack Obama's health care overhaul has dropped dramatically in the United States in just a matter of weeks, the latest Associated Press-GfK poll has found. Still, Americans remain divided over complex legislation that Democrats are advancing in Congress.

The public is split 40-40 on supporting or opposing the health care legislation, the poll found. An even split is welcome news for Democrats, a sharp improvement from September, when 49 percent of Americans said they opposed the congressional proposals and just 34 percent supported them.

Anger about health care boiled over during August. Lawmakers returning home for town hall meetings faced outcries that the government was trying to take over the system, ushering in higher costs, lower quality — even rationing and euthanasia.

The United States is the only developed nation that does not have a comprehensive national health care plan, leaving about 50 million people without health insurance.

The congressional bills would require all Americans to get health insurance, either through an employer, through a government program or on their own. Tax credits would be offered for many of those who buy their own coverage but failure to comply could result in a fine.

"It's very significant that there's an upturn in support for the plans because after August there was

a sense that the whole effort was beginning to decline and would not come back in terms of public support," said Robert Blendon, a Harvard University professor who tracks American public opinion on health care.

"Even with this," added Blendon, "the country is still divided over whether or not moving ahead is the right thing to do."

In a significant change, op-

position among older Americans dropped 16 percentage points. Seniors have been concerned that Congress would stick them with the bill by cutting their government-run Medicare program to pay for covering the uninsured. Among the most reliable voters, they were much more wary of the changes than the public as a whole. The gap has narrowed. (AP)

Villar wary about an extended...

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to see how it will affect them," said Villar.

The Makati Business Club, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, the Federation of Philippine Industries among other business groups have called expressed alarm about the planned extension of the state of calamity status.

According to them, it may create more problems for the country such as job losses and supply shortage. Other business groups even fear that it may lead to a state of emergency and the exercise of police powers.

"It is understandable that we have to prioritize the needs of the flood victims but we have to take into account the repercussions of our actions to other sectors. In this case, if the business sec-

tor will be affected, it will have a chain reaction if our economy will slow down because of it," added Villar.

According to Villar, "It is also important to put a semblance of normalcy to the people's lives as soon as possible. Even the flood victims need to go back to their homes, to their jobs and move on eventually. They cannot rely on people's charity for long, we have to make them self-reliant again."

Regarding the feared food shortage due to the extensive damage wrought by typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng in agricultural crops and infrastructure, Villar said all possible efforts should be exerted to avert its possibility.

Damage from Ondoy alone reached over P5.5 billion, while Pepeng hit many rice-producing areas in northern Luzon and create damage of nearly a billion already based on estimates. Based

on estimates from the Department of Agriculture: 22,669 metric tons of palay, valued at P403.2 million, when Pepeng wrought havoc to 35,494 hectares of rice-growing farmlands in Isabela and Cagayan Valley, and the Cordillera region.

"The production of our farmers is really badly affected since most of their crops and infrastructure were damaged. The effect of this in food supply may not be felt in the last few months of the year and the agriculture department has made assurances about that. But the negative effects will likely manifest early next year," cited Villar.

According to Villar, "At this early, the concerned government departments and agencies should already put in place mechanisms to ensure the stable supply of food until next year. At the same time, help should be extended to farmers who suffered losses due to the typhoons." (Office of Sen. Manny Villar press release)

Successful Fil-Ams Encourage...

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also went back to his childhood town of Iguig in Cagayan Valley where he built a computer center at his grade school making it the only public school with the most modern computer network," the website further enumerates.

It was evident that a major factor why Banatao, Marcelo and Damarillo have been gifted with so much success is because they know how to give back to the community and to their homeland. All totally dedicated to philanthropy, the three speakers have been involved with organizations such as the Ayala Foundation-USA to help Filipinos transform their lives and open opportunities for them to create wealth that will ultimately benefit the Philippines.

The business forum, held on Sept 30 at the Marriott Hotel in LA, was sponsored by the Ayala Foundation-USA (under the leadership of its President, Vicky Garchitorena), Asian Business Association, Asian Journal, BPinoy, Hobson Dungog, ISYFA, Robert Half, and Goldilocks. Lynn M. Hess of iProject Partners and Asian Journal President

and Executive Editor, Cora M. Oriel were the forum chairs.

Among the attendees were Philippine LA Consulate Vice Consul Dan Espiritu and Trade Attache Archie Gomez, who both expressed the need for such an event to encourage more Filipinos to become entrepreneurs and break the old stereotypes or mindset that to be successful, one has to be employed in successful companies.

"I wished there was a business forum of this kind many, many years ago," said one Filipino businessman who attended the event. "It would have helped and challenged me a lot more," he added.

Chito and Jeanette Ilagan from West Covina shared why they went to the event. "We were so excited when we read in the Asian Journal about this business forum. Dado has been a friend for decades, since Mapua days. We saw each other every year during reunions, but we never knew his business story. He has always been very smart, even during college. But he is so humble; he never said anything," said Chito. "We are so happy and inspired to be here," added Jeanette. ■

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