Press Releases Rep. Roybal-Allard Announces She Will Reintroduce Her Bill to Investigate 1930s Mexican Repatriation

Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA40) announced that in the new Congress starting in January, she will reintroduce her bill to establish a commission to study the Mexican Repatriation of the 1930s, and recommend appropriate legislative remedies. In the 1930s, government authorities and private sector entities undertook an aggressive program to forcibly remove individuals of Mexican ancestry from the United States, including as many as 1.2 million U.S. citizens. The Congresswoman's current bill to create the commission, H.R. 6314, has not been considered by the House of Representatives this year. “It is long past time for us to have a complete accounting of this dark period in our nation’s history,” said Congresswoman Roybal-Allard. “As the first Mexican-American woman elected to Congress, I have been proud to call for the first ever official inquiry into the Mexican Repatriation. The commission I have proposed in this bill will help us get the full facts about these removals, and recommend appropriate legislative actions we can take going forward. This commission will add its voice and power to the continued efforts of advocates throughout the country to ensure the Mexican Repatriation is never forgotten and never repeated.” During the Mexican Repatriation, men, women, and children of Mexican ancestry were removed from the U.S. in response to public pressure to curtail the employment of Mexican Americans during the Great Depression. Massive raids were conducted on Mexican-American communities, targeting individuals of Mexican ancestry even when they were U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents. The raids also separated these U.S. citizens and permanent legal residents from their families, and deprived them of their livelihoods and constitutional rights. Many of the people who were removed were never able to return to the United States, the country of their birth. The commission will consist of seven members, three appointed by the President of the United States, two by the Speaker of the House (in consultation with the House Minority Leader), and two by the President pro tempore of the Senate (in consultation with the Senate Minority Leader).

The commission members will review the facts and circumstances surrounding the Repatriation removals, and the impact of these removals on these individuals, their families, and the United States’ Mexican-American community. It will also review past directives of federal, state, and local governments that required the removal of these individuals to Mexico, and any other information related to these directives. Finally, the commission will submit to Congress a written report of its findings and recommendations. Congresswoman Roybal-Allard’s bill builds upon the hard work of advocates from across the country, including the students in Leslie Hiatt’s fifth grade class at Bell Gardens Elementary. These students successfully pushed for a California law requiring that the Mexican Repatriation be taught in schools, and are now urging a federal apology for the repatriation.