

# Groups unite on immigration issue

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## Big march planned for next Sunday

**By Norma de la Vega**

STAFF WRITER

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Trying to harness the momentum of marches nationwide, local leaders are planning a series of events, culminating with a massive demonstration next weekend to support undocumented immigrants.

The organizers of the April 9 event are from about 30 community and religious groups in the county, including some that traditionally do not take to the streets.

“We can't remain silent while the people, many of whom pray in our churches, keep living in the shadows and facing the fear of deportation,” said Rosemary Johnston of the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, one of the organizers.

The marches have a common goal: to promote passage of laws that would offer undocumented immigrants the opportunity to live in the country legally and to reject a law that would turn them into felons.

Tomorrow, a march in Barrio Logan will dovetail with the annual parade to honor César Chávez.

Next Saturday, April 8, the American Friends Service Committee, a longtime civil rights group, is organizing a march from Chicano Park to Pantoja Park, near Kettner Boulevard and G Street. The largest event is being planned for April 9, called the “March for Dignity, Respect and Hope.” Local leaders said they have tapped a key organizer of the Los Angeles march that drew about 500,000 people last Saturday to help spread the word about this one.

The march is to start at 2 p.m. at Balboa Park, at Laurel Street and Sixth Avenue, and end at the County Administration Building on 1600 Pacific Highway.

The idea for the local mega march coalesced during a meeting Monday at the University of San Diego.

“Our people are tired of abuse,” said Ben Monterroso, of the Service Employees International Union, which represents janitorial workers.

Those on hand discussed the current debate in the Senate on immigration reform and the marches in Los Angeles and elsewhere and decided that San Diego needed to be involved.

Organizers met last night to continue to fine-tune their plan. They are from all sectors of the community, including from student groups.

The Rev. Scott Richardson, of St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, invited participants to protest passionately but peacefully.

Organizers are asking participants to wear white T-shirts to symbolize peace and not carry Mexican flags as a sign of respect for the United States.

“Let's not make the mistakes of the past when we protested against (Proposition) 187,” said local activist Enrique Morones in reference to the ballot initiative that sought to ban public services to undocumented immigrants in California.

The Parent Institute for Quality Education, which educates Latino parents, proposed setting up a phone bank to spread word about the march.

“Organizations that previously hadn't taken to the streets to protest are reacting because they're seeing that working people are being criminalized,” said the institute's Paty Mayer.

Kevin Malone, of the San Diego Organizing Project, a group of faith-based organizations, said fliers would be distributed in 25 churches this weekend to invite people to the march.

In North County, Arnolando Marin, another coordinator of the march, said he was trying to determine how many buses would be necessary to take people to San Diego.

Among of those organizing the April 9 march are: the Latino/Latina UnityCoalition; Catholic Charities; the Catholic Diocese; Justice Overcoming Boundaries; the MAAC Project, the Parent Institute for Quality Education; Excellence and Justice in Education; Izcalli; and Círculo de Hombres.

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