

By Deporting Farmworkers, Trump Bites The Hand That Feed Him

Central Valley Farmers,

I grew up running around in your dairies and spent my weekends driving through your orchards. I plucked oranges from your trees as a kid and spent my high school afternoons driving on the dirt roads that encompass your acreage. I know you, I appreciate you, I understand you, and most importantly—my roots are your roots. But also I am scared for you. I see your Make America Great Again signs sprinkling the sides of Highway 41 as I drive from in the South Valley and my heart aches for our community. I am afraid that you might have misplaced your trust, and that it will have consequences that none of us saw coming. This letter hopes to find you in a place to acknowledge, understand, and fight back because the Valley—as always—needs you.

You made it so clear that the Valley needed someone to have your back because it seemed like nobody else in Washington did. Nobody understood your specific needs or how you differed from the rest of the state. But President Trump did—he promised you just like he promised everyone else that he could be that person for you and that he understood our grievances. I'm sure most of you thought a lot of what Mr. Trump said regarding his harshest policies was just talk, especially when it came to immigration. Most people do want stricter borders, tougher immigration laws, and better assimilation of the influx of immigrants in this country. But something went unnoticed amongst some of you until now—as deportation mandates get introduced, our labor forces are taken away.

Mass deportation, as most farmers and dairymen would concede—will be catastrophic for our industry. Over half of our labor force is here illegally and if they leave, our farms and dairies will suffer. This would not only be devastating to our Valley, which relies heavily on agriculture to fuel its economies and households, but also to the rest of the nation. You have the immense responsibility of feeding the entire country—if it wasn't for you, Americans would starve. As farmers, you depend on these illegal field workers to milk your cows and harvest your pistachios or peaches just as the rest of the US depends on you to grow them.

As you also know, it isn't easy to obtain legal workers to do the backbreaking work our labor force does. They, and yourselves, are the well-oiled machines that feed our nation. If it were easy or if people were willing to do the job, American *citizens* would be lined up waiting to get hired as a farm worker—but that isn't happening. Which is why, we turn to illegal immigrants to sustain our farms and dairies. Deportations haven't happened yet in large numbers in the Valley, but have begun in parts of the Southwestern US. Plus, for better or worse Trump has kept to his word in all other respects so it truly is only a matter of time before he wreaks mentionable havoc on our community. You voted for stricter immigration, and you are getting it served warm.

This is the hand that you have dealt yourselves. You've been duped, as was most of America. The irony of what is fixing to take place just hurts—but there is a way out. You must fight to get your voices heard another way—in a way that makes President Trump understand. Appeal to your Congressional Representatives, who are more than understanding of the unique dependency we have on illegal immigrants in

the Valley. Call your senators and inform them of what is taking place, offering suggestions or ways to help. Fight for a path to citizenship for your farmworkers rather than complacently have them deported.

There are many ways to Make America Great Again and I urge you to find your own.