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Arpaio Pardon Tells Bigots They Have a Friend in the White House

CHICAGO - The Latino Policy Forum condemns President Donald Trump's unusual pardoning of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, whose history of racial profiling, bigotry and defiance of federal laws led to his conviction of criminal contempt by a federal court judge last month.

According to the Washington Post, federal officials under President George W. Bush started investigating the Arpaio's office in 2008 for potential civil rights violations. The investigation continued under President Obama and, in 2011, the Justice Department concluded Arpaio had engaged in systemic racial profiling of Latinos. The conclusion led to the Department of Homeland Security removing immigration-enforcement authority from Arpaio's agency.

Last July, Arpaio was convicted of criminal contempt of court, stemming from a 2007 racial-profiling case in which Latinos were being discriminated against at traffic stops," **Forum Executive Director Sylvia Puente said.** "A federal judge ordered Arpaio to stop to stop detaining people solely because they were Latino and suspected of being undocumented. Arpaio responded by publicly thumbing his nose at the order and vowing to continue as his reputation began growing nationally."

"What we're left with is a former sheriff and a sitting president who tout the rule of law while flagrantly violating the notion by overruling a judicial decision that clearly articulated the sheriff's contempt and blatant disregard for our process of government," Puente said. "The president has sided with an unrepentant racist and once again lifted his supporters above the law."

"Joe Arpaio has bragged about being 'America's toughest sheriff,' but in reality he's a disgrace to the men and women who wear a police uniform and the list of reasons is too long to include here," Puente said. "However, some of the lowlights involve his time as sheriff of the Phoenix area, when Arpaio kept immigrants in medieval conditions in a tent city referred to as a 'concentration camp,' where inmates were forced to work on chain gangs and publicly humiliated by being forced to wear pink underwear. He had jail cameras that showed female inmates using the toilet accessible on the Internet. A troubling number of inmates were brutalized under his watch. All the meanwhile, Arpaio bragged about profiling Latinos with his immigrant sweeps, and when reporters covered his antics he had them arrested."

Arpaio's wanton disregard for human rights and brutality of brown-skinned people has cost Maricopa County millions of taxpayer dollars in lawsuits. Puente added. "This pardon comes on the heels of Trump claiming to want to heal America's wounds suffered from Charlottesville. However, with this action, the president has done nothing less than assure racists across the country that they have a friend in the White House," Puente said.

About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit www.latinopolicyforum.org.