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Protesters outside the hotel where President Bush spoke yesterday challenged the president's immigration policy. (Branimir Kvartuc/ Associated Press)

# Bush slams mass deportation plan

The Boston Globe

## Calls lawmakers' effort unrealistic

By Charlie Savage, Globe Staff | April 25, 2006

WASHINGTON -- President Bush laid down his marker in the intense congressional fight over immigration yesterday, declaring that it's "unrealistic" for lawmakers to undertake any legislative proposal that includes the mass deportation of the millions of foreigners living illegally in the United States.

"I know this is an emotional debate," Bush said in a speech before the Orange County Business Council in California. "But one thing we cannot lose sight of is that we're talking about human beings -- decent human beings that need to be treated with respect. Massive deportation of the people here is unrealistic. It's just not going to work."

Hoping to spur Congress to make sweeping changes this year that would shut down the "underground industry" of illegal labor, Bush praised a stalled Senate proposal that would allow most undocumented immigrants to stay in the country legally and work toward citizenship. The Senate plan, sidetracked by last-minute partisan bickering, would allow the undocumented who have been in the United States at least five years to stay if they pass a criminal background check, learn English, and pay a fine and back taxes.

At the same time, Bush took aim at a rival plan GOP leaders pushed

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through in the House of Representatives last year. The target of massive protests by immigrants across the United States in recent weeks, the House bill focuses on strengthening the nation's borders, penalizing employers who hire undocumented workers, and making illegal entry into the country a felony punishable by deportation.

"You can hear people out there hollering that [deportation] is going to work," Bush said. "It's not going to work."

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Bush made his comments on the eve of the Senate's return from a two-week Easter recess. Before adjourning, the chamber was on the verge of passing a bill that would create a new guest-worker system for future immigrants while allowing most undocumented workers to stay legally in the country.

But the Senate's effort faltered amid disputes over amendments to the bill, and prospects of passing major changes to immigration laws before midterm congressional elections in November dimmed significantly.

Despite Bush's words, activists who favor a tougher approach to immigration said yesterday they will continue to push Congress to back the House's version of an immigration bill.

Susan Wysoki, a spokeswoman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, said the president is "ignoring the facts" when he suggests that a widespread crackdown would burden the government with massive deportations. Instead, getting tough with businesses would persuade undocumented workers to leave the country, essentially "deporting themselves," she said.

"Employers really need to feel the heat on this issue," Wysoki said. "When the work is not available to illegal immigrants, they will go home." [Continued...](#)

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