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'No match' letters protested

About 500 march for immigration rights

By **GEORGIA PABST**
gpabst@journalsentinel.com

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About 500 people marched from Milwaukee's south side to the downtown Social Security office Friday morning as part of an effort to get the agency not to send "no-match" letters to employers.

This week, a federal judge in San Francisco issued a preliminary injunction against the government using Social Security no-match letters as a way of trying to determine whether a worker is an illegal immigrant. Labor and immigrant rights groups had filed suit to block the practice.

The Department of Homeland Security had warned companies they could face criminal or civil sanctions if they were sent letters that indicated some of their employees' listed Social Security numbers didn't match Social Security Administration records and the employer couldn't resolve the discrepancy within 90 days.

"Although the court found merit, the case is not final, and we still want to send the message that the Social Security has a choice not to send no-match letters to employers regardless," said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, executive director of Voces de La Frontera, a worker rights group.

The march went from the Voces office at S. 5th and Washington streets to the Federal building at 310 W. Wisconsin Ave., chanting, "No more, no match."

Banners read: "Fair immigration reform is the solution - No more no-match letters."

When marchers arrived at the federal building, Karyl S. Richson, a public affairs specialist with the Social Security Administration, met the group and accepted a mock no-match letter asking the agency not to send the letters. It cited many errors that are contained in the database and said the no-match letters present "new burdens for good employers."

Richson offered to arrange a meeting with representatives of the group and a representative of Homeland Security.

Meanwhile Friday, the Federation for American Immigration Reform sent an e-mail alert urging Wisconsin residents to call their legislators to stop Gov. Jim Doyle's proposed new budget, saying it will "likely make Wisconsin a magnet for more illegal aliens."

The non-profit organization says it opposes Doyle's proposal for in-state college tuition for illegal immigrants. It also is against his rejection of a provision that would require proof of citizenship to receive public benefits and services.

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