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### **Main Street Project calls for civility and respect in immigration debate**

MINNEAPOLIS — In response to recent statements by Governor Tim Pawlenty and the community meetings organized by Senator Joe Gimse, (R-Willmar) and Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen, (R-Alexandria) the Minneapolis-based *Main Street Project* today released a recommendation on a constructive approach to addressing the issue of immigration.

In addition to asking for a respectful, civil debate, the statement also calls for a moratorium on local and state immigration policy efforts and calls on Congress to take responsibility for solving the problem at the federal level. By structuring the debate in this way, Main Street Project hopes to draw attention to the damage caused by anti-immigrant groups and individuals use of heated rhetoric, targeting certain immigrant populations and dividing communities.

Since 2003, Main Street Project has been actively involved in Willmar through its Latino Leadership and Raíces Projects, programs designed to strengthen community through relationship building, leadership development, and non-partisan civic engagement.

"Immigration is a complex and difficult issue and one we care deeply about," said Willmar resident Maria Díaz, Minnesota Cluster Coordinator for the Raíces Project. "There is no doubt that our immigration system needs repair. We just think that in order to find solutions, it's important to look at the underlying problems."

"It's no surprise that politicians are talking about immigration in small towns", said Main Street Project Director Amalia Anderson. "Rural communities have seen some of the greatest increases in immigrant population, much of it Latino. With a presidential election this year, there is going to be constant pressure to keep a spotlight on immigration for political reasons."

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*The Main Street Project is a grassroots, public policy and cultural organizing initiative that offers training and technical assistance to rural communities in Minnesota and Iowa.  
The Raíces Project is a four-state, rural Latino capacity-building initiative.*