



Kurt Ellison

Students Saida Solano and Esmeralda Gonzalez carry flags yesterday during march to protest what they call Gov. Wilson's 'attacks on immigrants'.

Marchers protest Wilson's policies

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Carrying signs that read "Deport Wilson" and "Boycott Wilson," a group of demonstrators calling for an end to Gov. Pete Wilson's attacks on immigrants marched down Watsonville streets yesterday to a rally at Watsonville Plaza.

About 50 people took part in the march, which began around noon at H.A. Hyde Elementary School and continued to the plaza down Freedom Boulevard, Lincoln Street and East Lake Avenue.

Many of the marchers wore T-shirts with the picture of Cesar Chavez, founder of the United Farmer Workers. Chavez died last year in Arizona.

The demonstrators said Wilson's attacks on immigrants were racist and have eroded race relations in California. They said he is looking for a "scapegoat" to blame for the state's floundering economy.

Wilson has engaged in an aggressive campaign for reform immigration laws, saying immigrants are a burden on the state. Among the proposals he backs is a law that would ban the spending state money to educate the children of immigrants. He also supports a law that would prohibit anyone who is not a legal state resident from attending a post secondary school.

Demonstrators blame Wilson for presenting a distorted picture of how immigrants affect the state economy. Immigrants are not an affliction on the state, they said, but rather help bolster its economy. In city's such as Watsonville, where immigrants make up a large percentage of the population, city and county economies are dependent on money pumped in by immigrants.

Esperanza Torres, a native of Mexico who has lived in Watsonville for nearly 20 years, said Watsonville's economy would

collapse if immigrants were to leave the area. "This place would tremble," she said.

Rolando Ortega, a senior at Watsonville High, said Wilson's proposals to cut funding for education are a great concern to him and his fellow students. Ortega, who was born in the United States but whose parents are natives of Mexico, said if children of immigrants were not allowed to go to school, he sees these students stripped of hope for a bright future and predicted that crime in the state would skyrocket.

A proposal by Wilson to send U.S. troops to guard the U.S.-Mexico border is a recipe for disaster, Ortega said.

U.S. border patrols have been engaged in several incidents involving violence against Mexicans coming across the border, said Ortega, including the shooting of several Mexicans in recent years. Sending troops to the border would increase vio-

lence and create a crisis between Mexico and the United States, he said.

Wilson's anti-immigration rhetoric is nothing more than a ploy to inject a much-needed shot to his ailing re-election campaign, Ortega said.

Before Wilson embarked on an anti-immigrant campaign, polls had his popularity at rock bottom. After the campaign his popularity increased slightly, but polls show voter confidence in his leadership remains low.

Wilson's real problem, Ortega said, is that he has not been a "good governor."

"He has been unable to make the state economy recover," Ortega said. "He is using the immigrants as a scapegoat."

Ortega and about eight other Watsonville High students organized yesterday's march. He urged people to contact their elected representatives to express concerns about anti-immigration laws under consideration.