

## Dozens protest illegal immigration

**By Banks Albach /  
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Amid honks of support and the occasional impolite gesture, roughly 50 Bay Area Minutemen rallied at a Redwood City intersection Saturday, waving American flags and carrying signs protesting illegal immigration.

"We're not racists," participant Steve Kemp said before passing out handbills to motorists. "We believe strongly that this illegal immigration is going to be bad for the country. Illegal is illegal."

The rally at Jefferson Avenue and El Camino Real lasted about two hours. There were no arrests.

Many at the rally presented arguments that illegal immigrants are a drain on U.S. taxpayers, clog up emergency rooms and contribute to rising crime. The Associated Press reported Saturday that an estimated 12 million people are living in the country illegally.

"They should leave and come back in the legal way," rally participant Bill Nolan said. "Our schools are full of them. We want to stop them from getting benefits."

Their message offended more than a few motorists. Screaming at them, one young woman said they shouldn't make it a Hispanic issue because there are many illegal immigrants from other countries. Another young man stopped in the right lane and criticized a participant holding a sign on which she had drawn a Mexican flag and written, "Dump this flag or leave the country."

"I agree with what you're doing, but lady, you're a racist," he said.

Another sign read "Deport illegal aliens now." One man tied two signs on his pet dog, JJ. They read: "Got papers?" and "I'm legal, are you?"

At one point, an SUV with three young Hispanic women wearing sombreros drove by, blasting Mexican music. One waved a Mexican flag.

Groups that advocate for tighter border security are unfairly painted as xenophobic, said Nicholas Brooks, the rally's organizer.

"This a border security rally," he said. "We're not against immigration, just illegal immigration."

With the Redwood City council considering a resolution condemning the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in the area, Saturday's rally could be the start of a broader movement. Brooks, who spoke at Monday's city council meeting, where some immigration rights groups presented a petition for the resolution, said he'll sue the city if it passes.

"I think what you're seeing is the tip of the iceberg," Nolan added.

Roughly 500 people belong to the Golden Gate Minutemen. The group has chapters in several areas, including Redwood City, San Carlos, Fremont and Castro Valley. Its next rally is scheduled in Campbell at noon on May 12.