



May Day at Arizona State Capitol a Portmanteau Event

Multiple groups hold events on capitol lawn

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"Secure Our Borders" seemed to be the main theme for events held on the north lawn of the Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix on May 1, 2008. Under a huge tent on the south lawn a dozen or more tables staffed by volunteers offered information on "Service and Volunteerism Day" at the Legislature. And on the sidewalk across the street, a small group of about 20 Hispanics/Latinos lined up holding placards in support of Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon.

Attendance at the events was sparse, with the exception of a group on motorcycles who parked their bikes and blended in with visitors at the "support-our-borders" setups. Some setups had only one person, like the following one, more intent on sucking on her lollipop than giving out information.



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The Internet address for United for a Sovereign America was clear enough and on their [Web site](#) I found that a former member had come along and challenged the group. The response was, "[You are hopeless and will be the first to fall in when the real fight starts.](#)" The full text is worth a read to better understand what is happening with such groups.

I ran into Don Goldwater, a former Republican gubernatorial candidate, who gave me his card while talking with somebody about how sometimes people get turned away from attending meetings even though they are listed as being open to the public.



▲Don Goldwater (right).
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Don's card listed him as Chairman of LAW/SOLE. The details of these projects can be found on www.azgrassroots.com, whose banner reads, "Having a National Impact While Protecting Citizens of Arizona." LAW refers to Legal Arizona Workers and SOLE refers to Support Our Law Enforcement.

These are two of the more contentious subjects in Arizona: who is considered a legal worker, and what can be done to enforce the law so Phoenix doesn't continue to be a sanctuary for illegal workers and doesn't give amnesty to such workers or those who employ them.

These subjects also raise questions of who is to enforce such laws, which, in turn, raises questions concerning Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon (some support him, some call for his resignation) and Maricopa Sheriff Joe Arpaio (some support him, some say his immigration patrols are illegal as they are a form of racial profiling).

The Minuteman Civil Defense Corps table had a wide assortment of minutemen gear including a sticker that said, "If This Were Crawford TX, The Marines Would Be Here!" The handout said that volunteers have reported over 30,000 people entering the country illegally and that nearly 14,000 from 26 different countries have been apprehended by the Border Patrol.



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When I asked how many members their organization had, they said, "We've got people in most every state. We have over 10,000 registered volunteers of all ages, races, religions, political persuasions."

When I suggested that trying to physically secure the border was a losing task, as it would just cost too much, they said, "That's a very naive thought. We think it's very possible because it's been proven in California where building a fence secures an area. If you talk with Border Patrol agents in Yuma, San Diego, or Texas you would come away with factual knowledge."

More information can be found on their [Web site](#).

The tables behind the Service and Volunteerism tent had some relationship with one of the three programs that comprise [AmeriCorps](#): AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).



▲Judy Tripp (left) and Shirley Kosisky (right).
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According to the handout, the East Valley RSVP is part of Senior Corp, where volunteers use their life and job skills to meet community needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other areas. Judy Trip and Shirley Kosisky said, "Volunteers must be 55 or older with a desire to give back to their communities; there are over 12,000 in Arizona."

More information is available on their [Web site](#).



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In charge of the Public Allies table was Celia Williams, who said, "We focus on developing new leadership and send eighteen to thirty year olds with full apprenticeships into the non-profit sector. About 50 percent have either GED or high school diplomas."

I said that the various antiwar and anti-recruitment demonstrations I'd observed

in Los Angeles didn't seem to be many positive options for young people but this looked promising.

Celia agreed, and said, "For people thinking about joining a nonprofit this is a great way to try it out. Last year we graduated 12 people and half were offered full-time positions at the organization where they served. The other half went on to graduate school, out of state, because we do give out education awards. This year we will graduate 22 people and some of them have already been offered full-time positions."

She said Public Allies Arizona operates under the Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation at Arizona State University and that she is the alumni and community outreach coordinator and can be reached at (602) 496-1053 or celia.williams@asu.edu.

Across the street from both the Secure Our Borders groups and the Arizona Service tables were a small group of Hispanics/Latinos holding placards supporting Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon. Although I managed to get a photo, I wasn't able to talk with them as they disappeared when I was on the other side of the street.



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Keeping an eye on things in case they started to get out of hand -- they didn't -- were the police.



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