



Interfaith Immigration Newsletter

JANUARY 2012

# DREAM Sabbath 2011



***This fall, faith communities around the country held hundreds of “DREAM Sabbath” events to raise awareness for the DREAM Act.***

During the fall of 2011, led by member organizations and denominations of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, thousands of people of faith participated in DREAM Sabbath. In over 500 congregations, people from all faiths and from across the theological and political spectrum gathered to hear the stories of DREAM students, to pray for their welfare and for their hopes to become U.S. citizens to become true, and to further educate themselves and their communities about the DREAM Act and the need for it to become law.

DREAM Sabbath was a time when faith and action came together; where worship and political advocacy was a vibrant means of religious expression. The power of DREAM Sabbath was not just limited to the over 500 services that happened during the fall of 2011 though. The power of DREAM Sabbath is still developing as the relationships between congregations and DREAM Act students that are deepened, the thousands of congregants who are educated and will take action to show their support, and the teams of faith communities working together to ensure that their members of congress stand as champions of immigrants’ rights to ensure that the DREAM Act is passed.

## **FEATURED INSIDE**

1. DREAM SABBATH & SECURE COMMUNITIES TOOLKIT
2. FAITHFUL RESISTANCE TO HB 56
3. POLICY UPDATES
4. CELEBRATING RECENT VICTORIES

## ***Secure Communities Toolkit***

Do you want to learn more about how to stop the worst abuses of the Secure Communities program? Are you concerned about the negative effects the program is having on individuals and families in your community? *Are you ready to take action?*

**[Click here to learn how you can make a difference.](#)**

Resources we've assembled include a Toolkit that explains how S-Comm works and presents a step-by-step guide on how to set up meetings with officials in your community to request changes in how they respond to S-Comm related requests by ICE.

# Faithful Resistance to HB 56

## *Building a Movement for One Family and One Alabama*

Since the passing of House Bill 56, the harshest anti-immigrant legislation yet to pass in the United States, there has been a swelling movement in resistance to this inhumane and unjust law. The faith voice has been particularly poignant in a Bible belt state that has a church on every corner. Spanish masses and Evangelical Services are down by about 25%. Many church-led English as Second Language courses have been abandoned, while every mainline denomination felt a serious challenge to their religious freedoms from the House Bill's attempt to criminalize "harboring and transporting."

United Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran and Catholic Bishops have spoken out against the bill and have found growing support. United Methodist churches have put on various educational forums, and have developed a sign on letter with over 200 clergy signatures. Church World Service has been supporting an effort with the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice to organize a statewide network of faith communities to support the Repeal of HB 56. Lutheran leaders in Alabama have written letters and editorials opposing the bill in addition to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. This faithful resistance combined with growing mobilizations of local communities has pushed the politicians who voted for HB 56 to uncomfortable spaces forcing them to capitulate in considering amendments and admitting to the so called "unintended consequences."

### ***Building a Movement***

Immigrant advocate organizations across the country are working to support organizing efforts with the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice, composed of local groups. Some of the best organizers from across the country have seen the importance of joining the Repeal HB 56 effort and they have come to Alabama to give trainings on organizing and provide Know Your Rights workshops for impacted immigrant communities.

Three thousand people gathered for the campaign launch for "One Family One Alabama" on November 21<sup>st</sup>, at the 16<sup>th</sup> St. Baptist Church in Birmingham, historically known for the martyrdom of four young girls killed in the bombing during the most tense struggles of the Civil Rights Movement. The event showed a strong unity between Latin American and African American communities. Many faith leaders from the Civil Rights struggle are joining the movement against this unjust bill. As these two marginalized groups are often pitted against one another for the benefit of those in power, the importance of working together is essential to build support for humane immigration reform at the national level.



### ***Ally Faith Communities***

Many churches are already involved with this struggle, especially those who work with Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM). However, on a statewide level there is a lot of work still needed to bring people of different faith networks together. All churches are in dire need of further education on the issue of immigration; we must build bridges with impacted immigrant congregations and Anglo Ally congregations. Church World Service (CWS) is reaching out to member denominational pastors throughout the state and coordinating with GBM, Faith in Public Life and the Midwest Academy to develop an organizing training to pull in faith leaders and build leadership, capacity, and empowerment at a local level.

### ***What You Can Do?***

The extreme nature of the Alabama law highlights the importance of not letting such hateful policies come to your state. Various states like North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia are considering possible Alabama Copycats. At the same time some states, such as Iowa, are pushing for state compacts and looking for positive reforms. While Maryland passed a state-level "DREAM Act" in Maryland last year, it will now face a ballot referendum in next year's election. There are many other state struggles happening right now, so get involved in your local area as we together continue to build for a time in which we might see a positive and humane comprehensive immigration reform to fix this broken system.

# Policy Update

## Legislative Updates

**On September 12**, Lamar Smith (R-TX) introduced the Legal Workforce Act (H.R. 2885) which would make the E-Verify (employee verification) program mandatory for all businesses nationwide. On September 21st, the House Judiciary Committee approved the bill 22-13, but it has yet to make it to the floor of the House for a vote. It has 72 cosponsors total.

**On October 4**, the Senate Subcommittee of Immigration, Refugees, and Border Security held a hearing called “America’s Agricultural Labor Crisis: Enacting a Practical Solution.” In the hearing, Senator Feinstein suggested a bill that would give undocumented farm workers temporary legal status (five years) for themselves and their family. No bill has been introduced yet.

**On November 29**, the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act (H.R. 3012) passed the House 389-15. If made law, the bill would eliminate the current country-based cap on employment based visas. It would not raise the total number of employment based visas issued annually (140,000) but rather would make it more of a first come, first serve process so that those from countries with long lines would be able to enter the U.S. more quickly. It would also boost the per country cap on family based visas from 7 to 15 percent (again, not raising the total number of family visas). This adjustment would slightly ease the backlog for citizens and green card holders attempting to reunify with close family members, particularly from countries such as India, China and the Philippines.

**On December 13**, Sen. Schumer (D-NY) introduced a companion bill to the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act in the Senate (S. 1983). However, Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) placed a hold on the bill which, in effect, prevents the Senate from being able to vote on it and move the bill forward in the process to become law.

**On December 15**, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Border Tunnel Prevention Act of 2011 (S. 1236) which was introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and has five cosponsors. According to its official title, it is a “bill to reduce the trafficking of drugs and to prevent human smuggling across the southwest border by deterring the construction and use of border tunnels.”

**On December 23**, President Obama signed into law a funding bill that will increase immigration detention spending for FY 2012 by over \$150 million as part of a “megabus” FY 2012 appropriations bill. The federal government will now spend a grand total of \$2.02 billion and increase the number of detention beds available each day by 600 to a total of 34,000. This increase could result in the detention of about 6,000 more migrants next year.

## Administrative Update

**Most recently**, the Department of Homeland Security is engaged in a six-week pilot program in Denver and Baltimore to test the prosecutorial discretion that would close or terminate “low-priority” deportation cases. [Learn more here.](#)

## State Updates

### Alabama

June 9: HB 56 became law, making it a state crime to be in Alabama without documentation and requiring:

- Schools to collect information on students’ immigration status
- All businesses to enroll in federal E-Verify program

July 8: Civil rights organizations filed lawsuit against the bill

August 1: Department of Justice filed lawsuit stating that various provisions conflict with federal immigration law and requested a preliminary injunction to prevent enforcement of the law.

October 13: Two sections blocked temporarily by 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court

### Georgia

May 13: HB 87 signed into law

- Passed in final hours of legislative session despite opposition

June 27: Two sections of the law halted by judge

### Indiana

May 10: SB 590 signed into law

- Police groups opposed to law
- Expands police authority to enforce federal immigration laws; challenged in court by ACLU and NILC

June 24: District Judge issued injunction blocking section that would have increased police arrest authority for anyone ordered to be deported by an immigration court

### South Carolina

On Dec. 22, a federal judge enjoined three provisions of South Carolina's anti-immigration law. [Learn more.](#)

### Utah

March 15: Gov. Herbert signed:

- HB 497: revised SB 1070 immigration enforcement bill
- HB 116: Attempt to create “guest worker program” for undocumented workers currently in Utah

May 11: Hours after HB 4979 went into effect, law put on hold by US District Court



# Celebrating Recent Victories

**On November 8, 2011:**

Arizona State Senate President Russell Pearce recalled in historic recall election due to concerns over his immigration positions.

- Pearce is a self-proclaimed “Tea Party President”; one of the architects of SB 1070
- Pearce is the FIRST state Senate president in U.S. history to be thrown out of office in a recall election.

**On December 15, 2011:**

The Department of Justice released a report from an investigation of Maricopa county sheriff Joe Arpaio and his department which began in March 2009. Among the findings:

- Arpaio engaged in “a pattern of practice of misconduct that violated the Constitution and federal law”
- Latino motorists were 4-9 times more likely to be stopped without any legal cause than were non-Latinos in Maricopa County.
- Arpaio retaliated against those who complained about his policies.

**On January 6, 2012:**

DHS announced a policy change that would ease the process some undocumented immigrant children and spouses to pursue a path to permanence in the United States. [See here for more details.](#)



## INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) is a partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting comprehensive immigration reform that reflects our mandate to welcome the stranger and treat all human beings with dignity and respect. The events, news, and action alerts in this email do not necessarily receive the support or reflect the views of every member organization of the Coalition. For more information about the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, visit [www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org)