

EMBARGOED UNTIL 3:00PM EDT, JANUARY 29, 2012

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DIVERSE NAT'L FAITH LEADERS REACT TO PROPOSED IMMIGRATION FRAMEWORKS, URGE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON COMPASSIONATE REFORM AND ROADMAP TO CITIZENSHIP IN 2013

(Washington, DC) – National faith leaders from Catholic, Protestant and Jewish traditions affirm President Obama's call for comprehensive immigration reform and a pathway to citizenship in 2013 and welcome Senate leadership on this critical issue. While clergy and lay leaders welcome both President Obama and the Senate's proposals, they call for legislation that prioritizes family unity and creates a pathway to full citizenship, that is in no way contingent on enforcement measures, for the approximately 11 million undocumented people living in the United States.

To arrange media interviews, please contact Jessica Barba Brown at [\(434\) 882-4163](tel:(434)882-4163) or jbb@faithinpubliclife.org

Statements from prominent Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faith leaders are below:

"I applaud the President's leadership in addressing the broken immigration system. For too long our communities have lived in fear as immigrant families have been torn apart through unnecessary harsh enforcement policies. The immigration problems we face as a nation are complex and difficult. President Obama's clear commitment to provide leadership and full engagement in the legislative process toward immigration reform will be critical. United Methodists have long been active in working with other faith leaders from across the country in mobilizing thousands of people through hundreds of public witness actions and meetings with members of Congress and their staffs. Comprehensive immigration reform is a major concern for us. We will continue to advocate for reform that will provide a pathway to full citizenship for undocumented immigrants and reunify families who have been separated. I look forward to working closely with President Obama and Congress to enact effective, just and compassionate reform."

- Minerva Garza Carcaño, Bishop, Los Angeles Conference, United Methodist Church

"We find it hopeful that common sense immigration reform is finally getting the attention it has deserved for some time. We have to find a workable system for those wishing to come into our country, and a pathway to citizenship for the millions of hardworking immigrants who contribute so much to our country. They have earned their chance to be a part of our democracy."

- Sr. Simone Campbell, Executive Director, NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

“A bipartisan group of Senators has spoken, no legislation can be called immigration reform without a roadmap to citizenship. Creating a just and compassionate immigration system that meets the needs of the 21st century won’t happen overnight and it won’t be easy. For years the faith community has been calling for change, and we will be watching every step of the way to ensure that families are protected and the dignity of every one of God’s children is respected. We expect and demand nothing less. For us, this isn’t just a matter of politics; but one of faith and obedience to Jesus’ call in Matthew 25 for his followers to ‘welcome the stranger.’”

- Rev. Jim Wallis, President and CEO, Sojourners

“While we await actual legislative language, HIAS is grateful for the Senators’ leadership and for their agreement on key issues: There must be a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. – including undocumented students who would be covered by the DREAM Act – and shorter wait times for family members seeking to be reunited with their loved ones in the U.S. Comprehensive immigration reform is an opportunity to fix a broken system that adversely affects immigrants in the U.S., including refugees and asylum seekers. Immigration laws enacted in 1996 intended to crack down on undocumented migration also included all kinds of artificial, technical barriers that deny asylum to persecuted people who have already fled to the United States. Now is the time to fix the laws that have undermined America’s leadership in providing safe haven to the persecuted.”

-Mark Hetfield, President and CEO (Interim), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

" As an organization that serves refugees and all immigrants, CWS affirms that legislation based on this framework could have far-reaching positive impacts on the lives of those who, but for mere papers, are Americans in heart and contribution. Our immigrant brothers and sisters are an intrinsic part of our communities. We worship together, work together, build community together, our children learn together, and we pledge allegiance to the same flag together. We have a Biblical call to welcome the stranger and love our neighbor, and immigration reform will help us as a nation fulfill that call.”

-John McCullough, President and CEO, Church World Service

“Immigrants come to the U.S. to work, and yet when they are kept in the shadows without a path to citizenship, they are easily exploited and undermine standards for all workers. Thus, it is morally and economically right to create a clear and quick path to citizenship for immigrants. We should “welcome the immigrant” now.”

-Kim Bobo, Executive Director, Interfaith Worker Justice

“Now is the time for our country to hear the eternal calls of our religious traditions and of human conscience to ensure the dignity of all humans in our midst by providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. We are long overdue but sure to prevail since our commitment is steadfast.”

-Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz, Founder and President, Uri L'Tzedek, Orthodox Social Justice

"The Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ continues its radical commitment to solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters. Our faith teaches us that all are created equal in the image of God regardless of race, nationality or immigration status. We applaud the bipartisan Senate's efforts to create a comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to

citizenship. We are enthused to see President Obama showing leadership on this critical issue. However, consistent with our prophetic voice and faith values, we side with the oppressed in their struggle. We are not content with citizenship being 'contingent' on more security provisions. In Arizona, we have seen the tragic deaths of hopeful migrants in our desert lands due to constant heightened border enforcement. We will continue to press forward to create a pathway to citizenship for those who cross with high hopes and noble aspirations, but will advocate against increased border enforcement."

-Rev. John Dorhauer, Conference Minister, Southwest Conference, United Church of Christ

"The time for immigration reform is now. Separated families cannot wait. Men, women, and children who are undocumented cannot be pushed aside. The President has outlined a clear proposal for immigration reform. While many of the details are unknown, we support him and his colleagues in the Senate, in their efforts. We pray that legislation will reflect the principles of family unity and full citizenship, as opposed to the punitive, border-enforcement provisions that still remain in the President's comments and the Senate's framework."

-Rev. Patricia de Jong, Church World Service Board Member, Senior Pastor First Congregational of Berkeley, United Church of Christ

"As one of many rabbis across the country committed to Ahavat Ger, (Loving the stranger), we commend the President and Senate leaders for their early-term commitment to grapple with our broken immigration system and policy. Courageous bipartisan steps affirming the humanity of millions of immigrants will show that the United States is the beacon of justice reflected by Emma Lazarus's words on the Statue of Liberty."

-Rabbi Jonathan Klein, Executive Director, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice-Los Angeles, CA

"The president's speech today represents a good starting place for Democrats and Republicans to come together to create a reformed immigration system that better serves families and the common good. LIRS and our broad national network of social ministry organizations, congregations, and church leaders are committed to working with Congress and the President to ensure that immigration reform will be just and protect vulnerable migrants."

-Rev. J. Bart Day, Executive Director of National Mission, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

"In the spring of 2010, we gathered on the Mall in Washington pressing for comprehensive immigration reform. In the ensuing 3 years, many more people have been negatively impacted by the failure to address this serious moral issue. Moving forward with this comprehensive plan, while not perfect and while still not adequately addressing those who exploit migrant workers, is still a significant step in the right direction. As a people, we are reminded 36 times in Torah that how we treat the stranger and the one most on the margin will demonstrate our fidelity to a founding vision of our people. I am hopeful that this step forward will bring our society closer to that ideal."

-Rabbi Morris J. Allen, Beth Jacob Congregation, Mendota Heights, MN

"By producing an initiative that accepts the premise of a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, the eight Senators recognize immigration as a key factor in bolstering America's economic strength and democratic pluralism. The proposed reforms to the family and employment visa categories are also encouraging. Allowing immigrant families to more easily reunite with their loved ones promotes a strong social fabric in our communities. In addition,

making it easier for high and low-skilled immigrant workers to come to this country will help to ensure that American businesses have the labor they need to compete in a global economy.”

-Rabbi Noam Marans, Director of Interreligious and Intergroup Relations, American Jewish Committee

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The Interfaith Immigration Coalition is a partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform that reflects our mandate to welcome the stranger and treat all human beings with dignity and respect. Coalition members work together to advocate for just and equitable immigration policies, educate faith communities, and serve immigrant populations around the country. Through this coalition, hundreds of national and local faith-based organizations and faith leaders have called on Congress and the Administration to enact immigration reform consistent with these values. More information about the IIC is available at www.interfaithimmigration.org

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