

**Statements from members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition  
for the Senate Judiciary Hearing: “Comprehensive Immigration  
Reform”**

**February 13, 2013**

Statements submitted from:

1. American Friends Service Committee
2. American Jewish Committee
3. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
4. Church World Service
5. The Episcopal Church
6. Franciscan Action Network
7. Friends Committee on National Legislation
8. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
9. Leadership Conference of Women Religious
10. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
11. Missionary Society of St. Columban
12. National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
13. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
14. U.S. Jesuit Conference

*Addendum:* The Interfaith Immigration Coalition principles for comprehensive immigration reform



**American Friends  
Service Committee**

**American Friends Service Committee statement for the Congressional Record  
pertaining to the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing  
Wednesday, February 13, 2013**

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is an almost 100-year old faith-based organization grounded in Quaker belief in the dignity and worth of every person. AFSC provides direct legal services and engages in organizing with immigrants and allies along with advocacy and movement building throughout the U.S. We directly support immigrants and refugee workers and their communities to organize themselves, to seek out and raise their issues as a way to affirm their aspirations and needs, and to continue to make contributions to this nation.

Our immigration policy recommendations are grounded in AFSC's history and values as a faith-based organization and in the voices of the communities with whom we are deeply connected. We believe that the basis of U.S. immigration policy should be the protection of human rights and equal opportunity, not structures that privilege people of certain nationalities, enable employers to tap workers outside the protections of wage and safety laws, or result in the forced separation of families and communities. Humane immigration policy must include a fair mechanism for undocumented workers to gain permanent residency and citizenship in a fair, timely and orderly fashion. At the same time, it must stop the detention and deportation system that has torn apart families, and instead ensure that the human rights of liberty and due process are enforced.

Specifically we urge compassionate and effective immigration policies that are grounded in the following principles:

- Develop humane economic policies to reduce forced migration
- Protect the labor rights of ALL workers
- Develop a clear path to citizenship
- Respect the civil and human rights of immigrants
- Demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border
- Make family reunification a top priority
- Ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to services

AFSC applauds the "Dear Colleague" letter released by Senators Leahy, Coons, Blumenthal and Hirono calling on Congress to support immigration policy reforms that respect the human and civil rights of immigrants. We agree that the current immigration system is punitive, fails to provide adequate due process protections, results in unnecessary detention in often inhumane conditions and tears families apart. We encourage the Committee to embrace this values-driven approach to reforms.

AFSC urges the Committee to exert visionary leadership and to support new immigration policies that respect the human rights and equal economic opportunity of all in our communities. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.



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Statement of  
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Submitted on behalf of AJC to  
The Senate Judiciary Committee

Hearing on  
Comprehensive Immigration Revision

February 13, 2013

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Since its founding in 1906, AJC has been outspoken in support of fair and generous immigration policies. As American Jews, we recall how our parents and grandparents made their way to this country seeking a better life, and know that we have prospered in and contributed to this country. That same opportunity should be available for others. Comprehensive immigration reform will strengthen America's global competitiveness as well as allow hard-working immigrants an opportunity to succeed in the United States, for themselves and for future generations—and, at the same time, promote respect for the rule of law and protect our national security.

In advocating for fair, effective and humane immigration policies, AJC acts in accord with the American Jewish community's longstanding interest in, and commitment to, a United States immigration and refugee policy that represents our nation's best traditions. According to Jewish tradition, "strangers" are to be welcomed and valued, as we were once "strangers in the land of Egypt." The Torah tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

AJC commends Senator Leahy (D-VT) for urging his fellow Senators to enact comprehensive immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship for law abiding immigrants already here and:

1. Provides for an enforcement process that matches our values, including a fair hearing before a judge, a bond hearing, federal court review, and access to counsel;
2. Provides for humane treatment of anyone detained by immigration authorities and ensures that no one is deprived of their liberty except as a last resort;
3. Reduces the impact of enforcement on children and families;
4. Clarifies that immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility that should be administered uniformly across the country;
5. Explicitly rejects discrimination and racial profiling; and
6. Ensures that all agencies charged with enforcement operate with accountability and transparency.

AJC also applauds the bipartisan framework for immigration reform introduced by Senators Schumer (D-NY), McCain (R-AZ), Durbin (D-IL), Graham (R-SC), Menendez (D-NJ), Rubio (R-FL), Bennet (D-CO) and Flake (R-AZ) on January 28, 2013. The basic legislative pillars of this bipartisan framework would:

1. Create a tough but fair path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants currently living in the United States that is contingent upon securing our borders and tracking whether legal immigrants have left the country when required;
2. Reform our legal immigration system to better recognize the importance of characteristics that will help build the American economy and strengthen American families;
3. Create an effective employment verification system that will prevent identity theft and end the hiring of future unauthorized workers; and
4. Establish an improved process for admitting future workers to serve our nation's workforce needs, while simultaneously protecting all workers.

By producing an initiative that accepts the premise of a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, the 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.

AJC recognizes the need for enhanced enforcement measures directed at assuring an effective and fair immigration system that also protects national security. However, AJC is concerned that the bipartisan framework proposed by the eight Senators does not quantify how and when the border will be deemed secure or provide specifics as to how the government would track visa overstays. Without objectively defining these critical components, it will be difficult to determine when these goals are met. In addition, the employment verification system proposed in this framework must include explicit protections against racial profiling and other civil rights abuses. We applaud Senator Leahy on his principles that explicitly reject discrimination and racial profiling and seek to provide for an enforcement process that includes due process protections. Above all, AJC looks forward to working with the Senate to draft comprehensive immigration reform legislation, and achieving in 2013 a genuine breakthrough on this critical issue.

Following the lead of all of these Senators, AJC declares our commitment to the passage of a common-sense bill that serves our nation's interests and upholds our Constitution. This bill must provide a holistic approach to reforming our immigration system and should include:

**1. A path to legalization for immigrants already in the United States.**

There are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States. Comprehensive immigration reform would provide these immigrants with a path to legal status and eventual earned citizenship. This track to citizenship should be realistic, rather than being so burdensome that it prevents integration. Reasonable criteria may include learning English, having a job, maintaining a criminal-free background, and/or paying a modest fine and back taxes. However, fines should not be excessive, exemptions should be made for vulnerable populations, and immigrants should not have to return to their country of origin to apply for legal status or citizenship. These measures would only deter participation in the legalization process. Creating a path to citizenship for the undocumented would open the door to a better life for those who desire to work hard and contribute in a positive way to American society but for now must live in the shadows, a situation that offends the dignity of all human beings.

Additionally, within the 11 million undocumented immigrant population, there are an estimated 50,000-65,000 undocumented students who graduate from American high schools each year. Many came to the U.S. at a young age, have grown up in American schools, developed American values, and are American in every sense except their citizenship. AJC supports inclusion of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act in a comprehensive immigration reform bill. The DREAM Act would provide this select group of immigrant students, who at this time are only eligible for a two-year temporary status under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, a permanent path to citizenship.

**2. Reforms that favor reuniting families.**

Family is the cornerstone of American society. Allowing immigrant families to more easily reunite with their loved ones strengthens our economy and promotes a strong social fabric in our communities.

Promoting family unity incentivizes integration and economic development, as families provide strong foundations for learning English, purchasing a home, pursuing job opportunities, starting a business, preparing children for college, and strengthening the foundation of our communities. When families are together, the money they earn fuels the U.S. economy through taxes, investments, and the purchasing of goods and services. Because of the strong economic and social value of family unity, enhancement of the family immigrant visa category must, under any circumstances, remain a priority of immigration reform.

Right now, many immigrant families remain separated for years – sometimes even decades – because of bureaucratic visa delays. Comprehensive immigration reform must reform the immigration system to expedite the visa process in favor of family reunification. This includes making family-based visas more accessible, reducing the current backlog of family-based visas, increasing the per-country numerical limitation for family-sponsored immigrants from 7 percent to 15 percent of admissions, and generally reorienting the visa system to prioritize family unity. These reforms would help ensure immigrant families reunite more quickly and protect families from being separated, thus promoting family stability and fostering economic growth.

Further, it is important that, in reforming the immigration system, we push back against efforts to deny citizenship to immigrant children born in the United States, which violates the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Also, we must ensure that family-based visas are not placed in competition with other visa categories, an approach that would be inimical to the goal of family unity and a better functioning immigration system.

**3. Adjustment of quotas for future flows of immigrants, including high and low-skilled employment visas.**

Immigration policies that promote entry of both high and low-skilled workers would strengthen our nation's global competitiveness and ensure that American businesses have the skilled and unskilled labor they need to compete in a global economy. AJC supports increasing or eliminating the numerical limit of visas for high-skilled workers in proportion to our country's economic demands, and establishing an additional visa category for foreign nationals who earn master's degrees or Ph.Ds in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM).

Addressing the low-skilled labor demands of the agricultural industry, AJC supports inclusion of the Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act (AGJOBS) in an immigration reform bill, legislation that would grant earned legalization to undocumented agricultural workers based both on past agricultural work in the U.S. and a prospective work requirement. Seasonal agricultural workers, due to their migrant status, are highly vulnerable to economic exploitation and denial of their civil rights, with little ability to defend themselves. AgJOBS represents a step forward in putting such workers on the path to eligibility for earned legalization and citizenship, better protecting their rights, their access to our legal system and their stake in our society.

Establishing an improved process for admitting future workers to serve our nation's workforce needs would allow our country to meet its labor demands while protecting the workforce from abuse. These forward thinking reforms would help to ensure that American businesses have the labor they need to

remain globally competitive and would benefit American businesses by providing a sustainable, reliable and competitive workforce.

**4. Facilitation of and support for immigrant integration.**

Many immigrants desire to naturalize but lack the necessary tools. AJC believes that the successful acculturation of immigrants is fundamental to a sound immigration policy, and urges greater efforts to facilitate newcomers' adjustment to American society. Acculturation efforts should convey an understanding of and appreciation for American democratic institutions, patriotism, and constitutional principles, including equality under the law and due process. At the same time, without a vigorous commitment to pluralism and respect for immigrant cultures, America risks increasing ethnic tension and resentment. Both the successful incorporation of immigrants and a respect for pluralism are necessary to preserve the "American dream" and sustain democracy.

Consistent with these beliefs, AJC supports the creation and/or reinvigoration of, as well as increased funding for programs and practices designed to effectively acculturate immigrants, including increased support for programs for adults and children. Also, comprehensive immigration reform should include greater emphasis on the importance of learning English by newcomers—adults and children—with greater funding for such programs so that all who wish to do so have the opportunity to learn English upon their arrival in the U.S. or soon thereafter. Finally, there must be recognition that acculturation cannot be accomplished without the significant participation of community institutions.

**5. Smart and humane enforcement measures that bolster our national security.**

Border policies must be consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the United States to implement its immigration laws and identify and prevent the entry of criminals, and of persons who wish to do us harm or otherwise pose a risk to our national security.

In updating and reforming border security measures, there should be (1) greater intelligence sharing regarding potential terrorists among the nation's intelligence and gatekeeper agencies; (2) increased use of state-of-the-art anti-fraud technology to create counterfeit-resistant passports and visas, and analyze suspect documents; (3) layers of security with multiple screening points for those departing for and arriving in the U.S.; and (4) improvements in the system that tracks foreign nationals who enter and leave the U.S., including the vigorous monitoring of those who enter with student, visitor, or employment visas; matching of entries into and exits from the U.S. in order to better alert the government to those who stay in the U.S. beyond the terms of their visas; and improved enforcement of applicable laws for those who overstay their visas.

To the extent Congress considers, as part of comprehensive immigration reform, the creation of a mandatory electronic work-eligibility verification system and action on "employer sanctions" that penalize employers for the knowing employment of unauthorized immigrants, such measures should incorporate adequate safeguards to protect workers from discrimination in the workplace.

**6. Reform of detention policies, due process protections, and special protection for asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable populations.**

The United States has a long history of global leadership in protecting persecuted refugees and displaced persons. Immigration reform legislation must include key changes to the U.S. asylum system to better ensure that refugees who seek the protection of the United States are afforded meaningful access to a fair, effective and timely asylum adjudication process and the U.S. must take steps to ensure that the U.S. asylum system reflects U.S. values and commitments to protecting the persecuted.

AJC supports the recommendations proposed in the Refugee Protection Act (RPA) of 2011 (H.R. 2185), and urges that an immigration reform bill include provisions to eliminate the limitations that prevent qualified individuals from applying for asylum, improve legal information for immigrants, invest in our immigration courts, and expand alternatives to detention, especially for asylum seekers and vulnerable populations. Enforcement measures such as detention and raids should be narrowly tailored, and should be carried out in a humane fashion and in accord with due process.

In sum, AJC calls upon our elected officials to enact immigration reform legislation that provides an opportunity for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria and, over time, pursue an option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens; reforms our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited; establishes new legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner with their rights fully protected; reduces the use of detention for immigrants, especially vulnerable groups and those seeking asylum; and ensures that border protection policies are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of identifying and preventing entry of terrorists and dangerous criminals, thereby bolstering our national security.

As a faith-based organization, we call attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and pursue policies that uphold the human dignity of each person, all of whom are made *b'tselem elohim*, in the image of G-d. We engage the immigration issue with the goal of fashioning an immigration system that facilitates legal status and family unity in the interest of serving the inherent dignity and rights of every individual, even as it enhances our national security and promotes respect for the rule of law. It is our collective prayer that the legislative process will produce a just immigration system of which our nation of immigrants can be proud.

AJC appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement and welcomes your questions and comments.



**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**  
IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA



*"As Christians committed to God's call to welcome the stranger and to promote the wholeness and well being of families, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) leaders have for years called upon our political leaders to move beyond our current system that leaves our neighbors in the shadows, divides us against one another, and devastates children by tearing apart their families. We therefore welcome an opportunity to achieve immigration reform that is not only comprehensive and bipartisan, but also consistent with our basic values of justice and compassion."* Rev. Dr. Ronald J. Degges, President of Disciples Home Missions

**Statement in Support of Just, Humane, and Compassionate Immigration Reform  
from Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries**

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a denomination of approximately 700,000 members and 3,500 congregations that was born from a frontier movement with immigrants among our first leaders. Our body was founded on the principles that all are welcome at the Table of Christ, and includes a large number of congregations with first generation Americans. We recognize the strength of the United States emerges from the diversity of its immigrants, and affirm that immigration has played a major role in the development of our countries and in the advancement of our economies.

Disciples commend the U.S. Congress and the Obama Administration in recognizing the priority need for immigration reform that repairs and updates our current broken immigration system. We welcome immigration reform that is comprehensive and bipartisan, and which is "just, humane and compassionate." To do so falls in line with our sacred scriptures, where "the presence of a stranger is seen as an opportunity for hospitality—the sharing of one's home and resources" (resolution on "Faith and Our New Neighbors," 2007.)

We applaud the principles outlined in the February 5, 2013 letter by Senators Leahy, Hirono, Blumenthal, and Coons which urge commonsense laws that affirm the equality of all persons, seek fair hearings and due process, reject unnecessary detentions, and require accountability and transparency in enforcement practices. As Disciples, we are compelled to

speak against mistreatment of the stranger as we remember God's command that "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21 NRSV). We support reform policies which reflect our church's historical call to "ensure adequate legal representation and appropriate civil liberties to all immigrants being targeted and detained for national security reasons" (resolution "On Assuring Civil Liberties and Equal Justice to Immigrant Communities in the United States," 2003.)

We further insist that security for our country should not result in racial discrimination, threats of deportation, or targeting immigrants on the basis of national, ethnic and religious identity. We support the right of our nation to defend our borders and to ensure the integrity of the workplace through enforcement. However, our nation has pursued policies focused upon enforcement for over twenty five years, and unnecessarily punitive and disproportionate enforcement must not deprive immigrants of their basic human and civil rights.

Therefore, last week we joined our denominational voice with diverse ecumenical partners in the "Christian Churches Together" network from Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Orthodox, and Historic Black churches, to highlight these unified principles for fundamental immigration reform:

- An earned path to citizenship for the 11 million people in the United States without authorization.
- The priority of family reunification in any immigration reform.
- Protecting the integrity of our borders and protecting due process for immigrants and their families.
- Improving refugee protection laws and asylum laws.
- Reviewing international economic policies to address the root causes of unauthorized immigration.

We pray for legislators in their important work of crafting legislation that reflects our values for just, humane, and compassionate immigration reform, and look forward to supporting these reforms together.



## Church World Service statement for the Congressional Record pertaining to the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013

As the U.S. Senate considers how to best fix the U.S. immigration system, Church World Service (CWS), a 67-year old humanitarian organization, urges the Senate to enact immigration reforms that strengthens family unity and provides a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who are currently undocumented. The CWS network of 37 protestant denominations and 36 refugee resettlement offices across the country welcomes newcomers by helping them integrate into their new communities. We advocate for immigration reform not only because it is the right thing to do to improve the lives of our immigrant brothers and sisters, but also because it is the smart thing to do for our economy and communities.

Immigration reform must include a workable, clear, and attainable path to full citizenship for the approximately 11 million men, women and children who are undocumented. These aspiring citizens are American in all but paperwork, and should be provided an opportunity to take the citizenship exam and pledge the oath of allegiance. As shown by a recent bipartisan poll conducted by Hart and Public Opinion Strategies, 80% of Americans support immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship.<sup>1</sup>

Immigration reform must also prioritize family unity. Family unity is integral to the economic contribution of immigrants, and also key to the function of our immigration system. When families are separated by lengthy visa backlogs, bars to re-entry, and no option to adjust their status, our immigration system, by failing to function in a timely way, incentivizes illegal entry.

Family unity spurs integration, as families provide strong foundations for learning English, purchasing a home, pursuing job opportunities, starting a business, preparing children for college, and contributing to communities. When families are together, the money they earn fuels the U.S. economy through taxes, investments, and the purchasing of goods and services. A key example of this are immigrant-owned companies, many of which are run by families, contribute more than \$775 billion dollars annually to U.S. gross domestic product, creating jobs that are essential to economic growth.<sup>2</sup>

Our current visa system only allows U.S. citizens to sponsor their spouse, children, parents, and siblings; and Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) can only sponsor their spouse and children. In addition, visa backlogs can be as long as seven years for a spouse or minor child of LPRs, and as long as 27 years for a sibling of a U.S. citizen. CWS urges Senators to authorize additional visas so that families do not have to wait years to be reunited. We are opposed to any reduction in family visas or proposals that claim a false-choice between family visas and employment visas.

Immigration reform should not continue or increase harmful enforcement policies that have proven ineffective and inhumane. For decades, the United States has increased border and interior enforcement efforts. Last year alone, the U.S. spent more than \$18 billion on immigration enforcement, more than all other federal law enforcement agencies combined.<sup>3</sup> However, border militarization and fence construction, workplace and home invasion raids, utilizing local police to enforce immigration laws, and

<sup>1</sup> National Immigration Reform Survey. Hart Research Associates / Public Opinion Strategies. <<http://www.seiu.org/immigration/Immigration%20Toplines%20Public%20Release.pdf>>

<sup>2</sup> Open for Business. The Partnership for a New American Economy. <<http://www.renewoureconomy.org/sites/all/themes/pnae/openforbusiness.pdf>>.

<sup>3</sup> Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery. The Migration Policy Institute. <<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/enforcementpillars.pdf>>.

inhumane detention, coupled with congress's failure to enact real solutions, have only further damaged an already broken system.

CWS is committed to working with all members of the Senate and House to enact immigration reform that will keep families together and provide a pathway to citizenship. Such reform would mark real progress. We need to make our immigration system work better for our economy and for the fabric of our communities – families. We urge all members of the Senate to strive toward this goal.

THE  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH

**TESTIMONY ON OF ALEXANDER D. BAUMGARTEN AND KATIE CONWAY ON  
BEHALF OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH<sup>1</sup>**

**FEBRUARY 13, 2013**

We thank Senator Leahy, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Ranking Member Grassley for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We welcome this hearing on the need for comprehensive immigration reform because we believe that our immigration system is broken, and that we as a nation deserve an immigration system that reflects our values and our history. Our nation and our faith find foundation in the belief that all people are created in the likeness of God and should therefore be treated with dignity, equality, and fairness under our laws.

The Episcopal Church's support for comprehensive and humane reform of our immigration laws stems from our decades-long commitment to immigrants and refugees, rooted in our biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and serve the "least of these," among us. For over 60 years, the Episcopal Church has resettled refugees fleeing persecution and has served as a forceful advocate for the needs of refugees, immigrants and other at-risk migrants for whom stronger protection is needed under our laws. This commitment to protection has led our highest governing body, the General Convention, to pass multiple resolutions in support of an immigration system that allows undocumented immigrants with established roots in the United States access to a pathway to citizenship. This includes a commitment the rights of all families, including the families of same-sex partners and spouses, to reunify without undue delay; labor protections under the law for both U.S. and migrant workers; and common-sense enforcement policies that respect the dignity and worth of every human being.

Each day, in congregations, diocese and communities across the country, the "strangers" among us enrich our lives and contribute to the multiethnic tradition of the American Dream. Immigrants of all skill levels, from those who pick the food that nourishes us to those who care for our children and elders to those whose technological innovations fix our computers, contribute economically, socially and spiritually to our communities. That is why we believe that any immigration reform must reform the entire system and avoid pitting different causes of migration and groups of immigrants against one another. Workers of all skill levels should be allowed to offer their needed contributions to our economy and they should be allowed to keep their families intact. Our system must not deny the socio-economic necessity of family, and the employment and family-immigration systems should be viewed as complimentary rather than competitive. Family members help one another integrate, pursue job opportunities, start their own businesses, and provide the foundations of healthy communities.

Our immigration system should be reformed so that immigrants who wish to reunify with their families or seek employment in the United States do not have to make impossible choices between our immigration laws and the people they love. Our Church recognizes the importance

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander D. Baumgarten is the Director of Government Relations, and Katie Conway is the Immigration and Refugee Policy Analyst for the Episcopal Church, a multinational religious denomination based in the United States with members in 15 other sovereign nations.

THE  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH

of adhering to our nation's laws, but we believe we must work change the laws if they do not respect the dignity of human beings or respond to the needs of communities. This call to right relationship within human communities is a cornerstone of the Judeo-Christian scriptural and ethical tradition, and finds expression for Episcopalians in the promise each makes at baptism to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being."

Our immigration system must be transformed to into a just and humane system that discerns between those who enter illegally to do us harm and those who enter because our system cannot provide them with a clear and timely path to family reunification or legal employment. The fundamental principles of legal due process should be granted to all persons and all immigration enforcement policies should be proportional and humane, which is why the Episcopal Church has called for the immediate termination of destructive enforcement programs like Secure Communities, 287-g, and the implementation of community alternatives to the costly prison-like immigration detention system.

We hope that this hearing provides us with the first step towards the justice and peace that we seek. Thank you for carrying the costly burden of public service, and for the opportunity to submit these views to the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alexander D. Baumgarten and Katie Conway



# Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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The Franciscan Action Network welcomes the work of the bi-partisan Senate Committee and the Obama Administration to make humane, common sense immigration reform a priority for this Congress. After years of failure to mend our country's broken immigration system, these efforts offer hope and encouragement to millions of aspiring Americans eager for a path to full citizenship, and to families separated by rigid and unfair practices within the current immigration system.

We support the principles stated by Senators Coons, Blumenthal, Leahy and Hirono in their "Dear Colleague" letter of February 5. We join these Senators in calling for immigration reform that is in accord with our country's values: i.e., provides enforcement that includes transparency, equality, due process, humane treatment, reduces the impact on children and families, and rejects discrimination and racial profiling.

We firmly believe, in accord with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, that reform must include a fair and reasonable path to citizenship for eleven million undocumented immigrants, many of whom have been working and contributing to U.S. society and economy for many years, and must also prioritize family unity. Principled reform should also address root causes of migration from developing countries and create a legal employment structure for future workers that protects both migrants and the U.S. citizen labor force.

While we applaud serious bi-partisan efforts to reform the current immigration system, we are concerned about proposals to make a path to citizenship contingent on confirmation that our southern border is secure. Congress must acknowledge that the border is more secure now than it has ever been, with as much as \$150 billion dollars spent on enforcement in the past ten years. Migration has decreased while deportations have increased. Demanding "proof" of security could continue to delay enactment of comprehensive and humane immigration reform.

We are eager to work with members of Congress as they develop legislation to bring our immigration system into harmony with American values of fairness, compassion, and the importance of family as the basic unit of a strong United States society.

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**FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION**  
*. . . a Quaker lobby in the public interest*

February 12, 2013

**Framework for Comprehensive Immigration Reform:  
A Good Start for Bipartisan Conversation**

The Friends Committee on National Legislation welcomes the Bipartisan Framework for Comprehensive Immigration Reform released on January 28 by eight U.S. Senators. We congratulate the authors of the Framework, who reached across party lines to acknowledge the need to fix our broken immigration system, and to propose some practical solutions.

The Framework includes several positive and important features. It outlines a roadmap to eventual citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. It recommends improvements in the processing of family visas that would help keep families together by reducing backlogs. It proposes to improve the process by which workers of all skill levels can come to the United States, and recognizes the importance of strengthening labor protections for all workers.

However, we are concerned about the Framework's proposal to increase, yet again, enforcement at the border and at ports of entry to the United States, even though the U.S. already invests more in immigration enforcement by the Department of Homeland Security than in all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. According to DHS reports, illegal border crossings have diminished dramatically in the past five years. Evidence indicates that border enforcement has been substantially addressed, and it's time to move on to other repairs needed by our broken system.

The Framework lists practical solutions for many immigration-related problems that need attention, and then frustrates the potential effectiveness of these solutions by creating unnecessary conditions and barriers. For example, the Framework proposes that resolving the situation of the 11 million currently undocumented immigrants who are here in this country should await "completion" of border enforcement measures. We believe that Congress's top priority should be to design practical and durable solutions to resolve current problems and prevent recurrence of the anomalies that characterize our immigration system today. Delays and barriers that prevent necessary solutions from being applied simply lengthen the amount of time that the nation must live with a broken system.

To create an effective repair to our immigration system, legislation will need to include a rational, specific, and attainable metric to describe what is meant by “completion” of border enforcement. Legislation will also need to include a clarification that agricultural workers who sign up for the special agricultural worker program may at some point leave agricultural work and pursue a roadmap toward eventual citizenship. Without such assurance, this legislation would create an anomalous “citizen-second class”—with no right to move or to change jobs or employers. Since the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment, this country has no such category of citizenship.

Finally, FCNL is concerned about the civil liberties implications of employer-based enforcement mechanisms – particularly a mandatory E-Verify system that will undoubtedly catch citizens, especially those with foreign sounding names – in their nets. Because employer-based enforcement systems that focus on individuals will reach much more widely than other approaches, the legislation must incorporate protections of privacy, due process, and fundamental fairness.

Various industries in the U.S. need more workers; communities need strong families. Families need each other. Everybody needs jobs. Our common future relies on an educated and committed citizenry. These concerns and values can merge in a fair and humane renovation of our immigration laws and programs. FCNL looks forward to seeing the details of the legislation – and to the opportunity to support the good parts and persuade lawmakers away from the parts that fail to fix our broken system.



**Submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee Regarding the Hearing on  
“Comprehensive Immigration Reform”**

**February 13, 2013**

HIAS, the global migration agency of the American Jewish community, welcomes the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding reforming our country's immigration system. Throughout its more than 130-year history, HIAS has advocated for just and compassionate immigration laws that honor America's tradition as a welcoming nation. HIAS is also a national resettlement agency and an international refugee services organization with programs around the world.

Central to immigration reform, 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. Additionally, immigration reform legislation must create legal and orderly avenues for workers and their families seeking migration to work in the U.S. in safe and secure environments with their rights fully protected.

Comprehensive immigration reform presents an opportunity to fix a broken system that adversely affects many immigrants in the U.S., including refugees and asylum seekers. Immigration laws enacted in 1996, intended to crack down on undocumented migration, also included an array of artificial, technical barriers that deny asylum to persecuted people who have fled to the United States. In addition, as Congress and the President work to fix the broken immigration system, they shouldn't neglect the refugees – some of our most vulnerable immigrants – who immigrate to this country each year. In order to ensure that local communities remain welcoming to refugees, we need to update our outdated laws, reverse chronic underfunding, better prepare refugees for life in America, and – for the first time – create clear goals and a comprehensive approach for successful refugee integration. We also need to better demonstrate the benefits of refugee resettlement. The humanitarian act of saving and resettling refugees not only benefits the refugees themselves – it also benefits the local communities where they resettle and the country as a whole, which gain so much from these newcomers.

We encourage Congress to incorporate provisions from the Refugee Protection Act into any comprehensive immigration reform bill. Specifically, the Secretary of State should be authorized to designate certain groups as eligible for expedited adjudication as refugees – currently the State Department lacks this authority and therefore is unable to address situations in which a group is targeted for persecution in their country of origin or country of first asylum and needs expedited resettlement for humanitarian reasons. Furthermore, comprehensive immigration reform legislation should address current laws that threaten the rights and safety of asylum seekers, including a harsh expedited removal system, arbitrary deadlines for filing asylum claims, and other limitations on asylum seekers' ability to obtain protection in the U.S.

As Jews, we support policies that fulfill the Torah's mandate to 'welcome the stranger,' as we know that effective immigration policies have often made the difference between life and death, between oppression and the opportunity for success. It is crucial that we utilize this opportunity to provide safe haven to the persecuted. HIAS looks forward to working with legislators and immigrant communities to revamp and revitalize our country's current immigration system in a way that honors our American and Jewish values.



**Statement to the Senate Judiciary Committee  
Principles to Guide Immigration Reform  
13 February 2013**

As women of faith we, the members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), take seriously the gospel call to welcome the stranger and care for those in need. As Catholic sisters we are committed to the precepts of social teaching rooted in the Catholic tradition that remind us that the dignity of the person is at the core of our moral vision of society; that how we organize our society affects human dignity directly; and that any system that is deliberately cruel or inhumane needs to change. Because of these beliefs, at our 2012 national assembly, LCWR, “called on Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform that includes the reunification of families and a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants living in the United States.”

Catholic sisters began coming to these shores 286 years ago as immigrants to serve immigrant populations. To this day our sisters continue to minister to these aspiring citizens in schools and hospitals, in the fields and in the cities. We see the devastating effects of the brokenness of the current immigration system every day. We share the pain of mothers separated from their children and fathers who have risked their lives for love of their families. We know the struggles of survivors of human trafficking and torture who seek comfort and safety.

The Senate framework and the principles laid out in the President’s speech in Las Vegas provide hope to our immigrant brothers and sisters and promise that the values that are the bedrock of our national identity will flourish—family unity, equal opportunity, due process, and respect for the dignity of all God’s children.

We welcome the letter of Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), along with Sens. Chris Coons (D-Del.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) which echoes our own concerns that any immigration legislation be grounded in the human rights principles that are the bedrock of our national culture.

Today our broken immigration system too often separates families, denies the dreams of youth, incarcerates innocents, and limits the rights of aspiring Americans. Our nation needs, and our people deserve, immigration reform that reflects the best of who we are. Immigration reform must prioritize family unity, provide a fair and reasonable roadmap to citizenship, respect human rights and restore due process to those detained by immigration authorities, protect the rights of all workers, promote the integration of new Americans, and address the poverty, persecution, and inequity that force migrants to flee their homes and families.

We look forward to working with lawmakers as they develop legislation that is grounded in the principles of the Constitution and fully reflects the values which bind this nation together.

LCWR is an association of leaders of congregations of Catholic sisters in the United States. The conference has nearly 1500 members, who represent more than 80 percent of the 57,000 women religious in the United States. Founded in 1956, the conference assists its members to collaboratively carry out their service of leadership to further the mission of the Gospel in today's world.



# Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

LIRS Statement for Hearing: "Comprehensive Immigration Reform"

Senate Judiciary Committee

February 13, 2013

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), the national agency established by Lutheran churches in the United States to serve uprooted people, is pleased by Congressional and Administrative efforts to draft and enact comprehensive immigration reform. People of faith have long called for an immigration system that prioritizes family unity and is grounded in humanitarian principles.

As this committee and others begin work on immigration reform legislation, LIRS offers our support for legislation adhering to the following five principles for reform:

- Providing an earned pathway to lawful permanent residency and eventual citizenship for undocumented immigrants and their families.
- Ensuring the humane and just enforcement of U.S. immigration laws, specifically by reducing the use of immigration detention and expanding the use of community support programs for immigrants who do not need to be detained.
- Protecting families from separation and ensuring an adequate supply of visas for families seeking to reunite.
- Providing adequate resources and protections to ensure the successful integration of refugees, asylees, survivors of torture and trafficking, unaccompanied children, and other vulnerable migrants.
- Ensuring the protection of U.S. citizen and migrant workers.

LIRS supports compassionate immigration reform, including an emphasis on a roadmap to citizenship for undocumented migrants, the importance of family unity, and acknowledgement that oversight and safeguards are necessary components. Bishop Julian Gordy of the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Southeastern Synod stated, "For too long, our families and communities have felt the harmful consequences of federal inaction on immigration reform."

## Create a Roadmap to Citizenship for Aspiring Americans

Any comprehensive immigration reform legislation must create an immigration process allowing aspiring Americans the opportunity to become United States citizens. LIRS supports an earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and their families that is accessible and reasonable.

Currently, those without legal status must live with the constant possibility of detention, removal, and family separation; uncertainties that have negative impacts on the well-being of individual

migrants as well as broader society.<sup>1</sup> A life spent living in the shadows violates the inherent dignity of each human being. A roadmap to citizenship will allow people who have been living in and contributing to our nation for many years to become full members of their communities. An earned pathway to citizenship has economic benefits as well: if all legal permanent residents currently eligible to naturalize did so it would increase the United States' Gross Domestic Product between \$37 billion and \$52 billion.<sup>2</sup>

### **Reform Immigration Enforcement**

LIRS will strive to advance immigration reform that secures migrants' rights and treats everyone with dignity and fairness.

As Congress has deliberated on how to reform America's immigration laws for decades, enforcement of current laws has exponentially expanded. When adjusted for inflation, the government spends 15 times as much on immigration enforcement today (\$17.9 billion) as it did in 1986 (\$1.2 billion).<sup>3</sup>

Since the last serious debate on immigration reform in 2007, the budget for the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) enforcement and removal operations has grown from \$1.984 billion to \$2.75 billion.<sup>4,5</sup> In fiscal year (FY) 2011, ICE detained an all-time high number of persons- 429,000.<sup>6</sup> In just the first six months of 2011, ICE removed 46,486 people with U.S. citizen children.<sup>7</sup> In FY 2012, 409,849 individuals were removed by ICE's Office of Enforcement and Removal Operations<sup>8</sup>.

The numbers bear witness to the facts that communities and families experience every day: enforcement of our immigration laws is happening at an unprecedented and incredible pace. Through LIRS's programmatic work, we have witnessed firsthand the detrimental effects immigration enforcement measures, such as immigration detention, have on individuals, families, and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Legal Violence in the Lives of Immigrants*, Center for American Progress [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/MenjivarLegalViolenceReport\\_execsumm.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/MenjivarLegalViolenceReport_execsumm.pdf) (December 2012).

<sup>2</sup> *The Dividends of Citizenship*, Immigration Policy Center, <http://immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dividends-citizenship-why-legalization-must-lead-citizenship> (February 2013).

<sup>3</sup> *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery*, Migration Policy Institute, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/enforcementpillars.pdf> (January 2013).

<sup>4</sup> *Unlocking Liberty: A Way Forward for U.S. Immigration Detention Policy*, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service [www.lirs.org/dignity](http://www.lirs.org/dignity) (October 2011).

<sup>5</sup> *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012*, PL 122-74 <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-112publ74/html/PLAW-112publ74.htm> (Dec. 23, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> *Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2011*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Policy Directorate, [http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/enforcement\\_ar\\_2011.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/enforcement_ar_2011.pdf) (Sept. 2012)

<sup>7</sup> *Deportation of Parents of U.S.-Born Citizens*, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, <http://www.lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/ICE-DEPORT-OF-PARENTS-OF-US-CIT-FY-2011.pdf> (March 2012).

<sup>8</sup> *FY 2012: ICE announces year-end removal numbers, highlights focus on key priorities and issues new national detainer guidance to further focus resources*, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, <http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/1212/121221washingtondc2.htm> (Dec. 2012).

Isatu Jollah, grew up in Sierra Leone during the country's civil war.<sup>9</sup> When she was twelve years old, Isatu was raped by rebel soldiers and separated from her mother. Isatu later suffered female genital mutilation (FGM) and was severely punished when she refused to perform the practice on other young women. Isatu fled to the United States where upon expressing her intention to apply for asylum at the airport she was detained in York County Prison (PA). While in detention, Isatu was denied medical care for complications relating to FGM. When post-traumatic stress disorder caused her attacks of anxiety she was isolated in solitary confinement.

Despite being an expensive and inhumane way to ensure appearance at immigration court proceedings, the growth of immigration detention has been steep and continual. The United States currently spends approximately 24% more money on immigration enforcement activities than on all other federal law enforcement programs combined.<sup>10</sup>

To detain a woman like Isatu for one day costs U.S. taxpayers an average of \$164.<sup>11</sup> LIRS supports increased use of alternatives to detention, which range in cost from a few cents a day to an average of \$22 a day and allow migrants to reunite with family members and contribute to their communities while undergoing immigration proceedings.<sup>12</sup> Isatu was eventually released from detention with a tracking device as part of an alternatives to detention program. Appearance rates in immigration proceedings for those released on alternatives to detention average over 90%, making these options a practical, humane, and economical alternative to detention.<sup>13</sup>

Any reform of our immigration system must include protections against arbitrary detention and the separation of families and safeguards to ensure enforcement is carried out in a fair, humane, and economically sound manner.

### **Prevent Family Separation**

LIRS strongly believes that a reformed immigration system must improve family unity. Family is the cornerstone of our faith and the grounding structure of our society. Comprehensive immigration reform must uphold the importance of families to our congregations and communities by including meaningful reforms to the family-based immigration system.

People of faith all over America wholeheartedly agree on the need for an improvement of the immigration process for families. “LIRS and Lutherans all across this country will be lifting up our voices and engaging lawmakers from both parties to answer the president’s call for fair and compassionate immigration reform that is both business and family friendly,” said LIRS President and CEO Linda Hartke.

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<sup>9</sup> *Broken Promises: Seeking Political Asylum in America*, Ladies Home Journal, <http://www.lhj.com/health/news/seeking-political-asylum-in-america/?page=1> (Feb. 2010).

<sup>10</sup> *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery*, Migration Policy Institute <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/enforcementpillars.pdf> (January 2013).

<sup>11</sup> *The Math of Immigration Detention*, National Immigration Forum, <http://www.immigrationforum.org/images/uploads/MathofImmigrationDetention.pdf> (August 2012).

<sup>12</sup> *Unlocking Liberty: A Way Forward for U.S. Immigration Detention Policy*, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service [www.lirs.org/dignity](http://www.lirs.org/dignity) (October 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

The avenues for families to legally immigrate must be accessible and sufficient to avoid family separation. The current family visa system forces too many families to endure years of separation from their loved ones. For some families who filed a visa petition before June 1, 1989, backlogs have forced them to wait over 23 years to begin the application process.<sup>14</sup> They will finally be able to do so in February 2013. Any reform of our immigration system must reduce these backlogs and improve mechanisms for family members to reunite with relatives in the United States.

### **Protect and Integrate Refugees and Other Vulnerable Migrants**

As one of the few organizations resettling refugees in the United States, LIRS sees the value of the refugee program as well as the opportunity for improvements in the processing and protection of vulnerable migrants. Comprehensive immigration reform legislation must include provisions to update all channels of migration to the United States and improve protection afforded to vulnerable migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Too many vulnerable migrants are denied protection for bureaucratic reasons. Currently, asylum seekers must file their request for asylum within one year of arrival to the United States. There are many reasons asylum seekers are unable to file within the deadline, including lack of access to legal services, the effects of trauma and torture, and language barriers.<sup>15</sup> The impact of this unnecessary and outdated deadline is striking. One in five asylum claims are denied because the case was filed after the deadline, making the deadline a significant barrier to protection in the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Those migrants who lack legal status in the United States may be particularly vulnerable to being targets of crime or violence. The U visa was created in 2000 to protect migrant survivors of violence who assist law enforcement in their investigative efforts.<sup>17</sup> The 10,000 annual limit on U visas has been reached prior to the end of the fiscal year for the last three years.<sup>18</sup> An expansion of the U visa program in comprehensive immigration reform would ensure migrant survivors of violence who work to assist law enforcement receive the protection they need.

LIRS is one of two organizations providing services to unaccompanied migrant children in the United States, placing them in foster care and assisting with family reunification. In 2012, the number of children crossing the border as unaccompanied minors spiked dramatically: 13,625 children were apprehended in fiscal year 2012 compared to 6,855 children in 2011, a significant increase that strained the capacity of service providers.<sup>19</sup> As Congress considers immigration reform

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<sup>14</sup> *Visa Bulletin*, Department of State, [http://travel.state.gov/visa/bulletin/bulletin\\_5856.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/bulletin/bulletin_5856.html) (February 2013).

<sup>15</sup> *Repeal the One-Year Asylum Deadline*, National Immigrant Justice Center, <http://www.immigrantjustice.org/repeal-one-year-asylum-deadline>

<sup>16</sup> *The One-Year Asylum Deadline and the BL-4: No Protection, No Process*, National Immigrant Justice Center, <http://www.immigrantjustice.org/oneyeardeadline> (October 2010).

<sup>17</sup> *VAWA Provides Protections for Immigrant Women and Victims of Crime*, Immigration Policy Center, <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/violence-against-women-act-vawa-provides-protections-immigrant-women-and-victims-crime> (May 2012).

<sup>18</sup> *U Visas Hit a Ceiling*, The New York Times, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/04/opinion/special-visas-for-abused-women-hit-a-ceiling.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/04/opinion/special-visas-for-abused-women-hit-a-ceiling.html?_r=0) (Sept. 3, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> *Protecting Unaccompanied Migrant Children*, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, <http://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/LIRS-Backgrounder-on-Unaccompanied-Migrant-Children-12-2012.pdf> (December 2012).

legislation, lawmakers must take into account the growing arrivals of unaccompanied children and ensure they are treated with compassion, particularly that they receive the screenings and services to which they are entitled by law.

### **Protect Workers**

LIRS advocates for provisions in comprehensive immigration reform that will ensure protections for U.S. citizen and migrant workers. As Congress builds an immigration system that ensures a supply of labor to meet national demands, future immigration laws must recognize the contributions migrants make to our communities and improve protections to ensure the safety, dignity and fair treatment of every worker.

### **Conclusion**

LIRS is nationally recognized for its leadership advocating on behalf of refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, immigrants in detention, families fractured by migration and other vulnerable populations, and for providing services to migrants through over 60 grassroots legal and social service partners across the United States.

If you have any question about this statement, please contact Brittney Nystrom, Director for Advocacy, at (202) 626-7943 or via email at [bnystrom@lirs.org](mailto:bnystrom@lirs.org).

### **Additional LIRS Resources**

- LIRS's principles for immigration reform may be read here: [www.bit.ly/WfmniH](http://www.bit.ly/WfmniH)
- The January 29, 2013 press release on President Obama's speech outlining a vision for immigration reform may be read here: [www.bit.ly/VxQHYW](http://www.bit.ly/VxQHYW)
- The January 28, 2013 press release on the release of the bipartisan principles for immigration reform in the Senate may be read here: [www.bit.ly/WhPPX2](http://www.bit.ly/WhPPX2)
- LIRS's FAQ's on the Family Immigration System may be read here: [www.bit.ly/11Jqt2Z](http://www.bit.ly/11Jqt2Z)
- LIRS's backgrounder on unaccompanied children may be read here: [www.bit.ly/YSeyzU](http://www.bit.ly/YSeyzU)
- The December 15, 2011 press release expressing concerns with increased FY 2012 immigration detention spending may be read here: [www.bit.ly/XoeHtA](http://www.bit.ly/XoeHtA)
- The October 2011 report, *Unlocking Liberty: A Way Forward for U.S. Immigration Detention Policy*, may be read here: [www.bit.ly/VwrNFE](http://www.bit.ly/VwrNFE)



## MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. COLUMBAN U.S. REGION

February 2013

The Missionary Society of St. Columban is an international Catholic organization committed to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Our faith teaches us that we are one human family and **we are called to welcome the stranger** (Mt 25:35).

In recognition of the migrants and refugees with whom we live and serve in the U.S. and around the world, Columban missionaries are pleased to see the release of the Senate's bipartisan proposal on immigration reform and to hear the President's pledge to address our nation's immigration system. We are especially gratified to see national leaders prioritize immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship and a commitment to family reunification.

**We see immigration reform as a critical step towards restoring right relationships** with our immigrant sisters and brothers. For nearly 20 years, we have ministered to immigrants on the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso, Texas and Juarez, Mexico. In our parishes, mission centers, and communities around the country including Texas, California, Nebraska, Illinois, Rhode Island, New York, and Washington D.C., we hear the stories of migrants and their families; we know the violence they suffer. We witness the shadows in which they are forced to live and the pain that family separation has caused. We also see the suffering of immigrants in detention centers and jails whose only crime was being undocumented.

Internationally we are present in Europe, Asia, South America, the Middle East, and Oceania. We view U.S. immigration as part of a broader global migration reality. We witness how U.S. policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, dollarization, and the Merida Initiative have contributed to instability and insecurity in communities and countries across the globe, causing people to move. **We are advocates for the United States to be a good global citizen and restore right relationships both internally and externally.**

The current reforms proposed do not meet these goals. We are concerned that the bipartisan framework makes the path to citizenship contingent upon our success in securing our borders and addressing visa overstays. We question who and how border security is and will be defined. Knowing that we have already spent billions of dollars on securing our borders, it is now time to secure the future of the 11 million immigrants living in our country. **We must not unnecessarily prolong or block the path to citizenship** of immigrants already present, or keep partners, children, and other family members apart any longer.

**We question the many stipulations required** to earn permanent residency and/or a green card in the United States. Conditions such as additional criminal background and national security checks and high fees and fines do not create a viable and accessible pathway; rather, they establish roadblocks on the ever-lengthening road to citizenship that keep this vulnerable population in the shadows.

**We are committed to an immigration policy that addresses the root causes of migration.** The current immigration reform proposals fail to adequately address the root causes of migration such as economic policy, climate change, poverty, political conflict, violence of many origins, and persecution that create unlivable conditions at home, forcing people to move and families to separate.

As Catholic missionaries, we dedicate our lives and service to advocating for the dignity and rights of weary and exploited immigrants seeking to work and to contribute to the social fabric of our nation. **Lack of legal documentation forces immigrants to live in a culture of fear, insecurity, and vulnerability.** This applies especially to immigrants on the Southwest border where mass detainment and deportations, criminalization of migrants, and militarization of the region is widespread.

**We look forward to compassionate immigration reform,** which seeks justice by granting protection and true legalization (permanent legal status and citizenship), to a person of any country or work industry in a timely manner. We seek reform that reunites families, and not on a temporary basis with guest worker programs. We seek reform which recognizes and addresses the increasing danger of creating a permanent underclass (of immigrants) in our society. Lastly, we seek reform in which all immigrants and their families hold the same freedoms and rights as any citizen of the United States.

Rev. Timothy Mulroy, SSC  
Director, U.S. Region

Amy Woolam Echeverria  
Director, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

**Statement in Support of Family-Based Immigration**  
**National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd**  
**Sister Gayle Lwanga, RGS**  
**February 13, 2013**

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd form one international congregation ministering in 71 countries on five continents. In the United States, the Sisters are spread from east to west in 23 states and also are in Canada. Founded over two hundred years ago in Angers, France, by St. Mary Euphrasia who believed that God is like a compassionate Shepherd whose love for all is boundless, Good Shepherd Sisters respond to a call to reach out to everyone and help awaken in all peoples a sense of each one's unique worth and inestimable value.

As a religious community we believe the unique worth of each individual extends to all immigrants, both documented and undocumented. Seeking to build a more just and compassionate society, we urge members of Congress to give priority to family unity when they are creating immigration policy.

The worse human suffering is being separated from the person you love. This suffering is even more so when it is separation from your mother or father, your daughter or son, your wife or husband

The Catholic Church has consistently taught the importance and the sacredness of the family. Without the presence of a secure and loving family, we cannot be emotionally nourished and develop into loving and socially responsible adults.

Please create legislation that assures that families will not be separated. Also, enact legislation that will ensure that the hundreds of immigrant families who have been separated for many years will be quickly reunited.



Justice  
and  
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**Statement to the Senate Judiciary Committee  
Principles to Guide Immigration Reform  
13 February 2013**

The United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries, gladly joins the faith community on this day, as together we witness to the plight of our undocumented brothers and sisters here in the United States.

The Judiciary Committee Hearing on Immigration falls on Ash Wednesday. On this day we wear ashes on our foreheads as a sign of repentance. Today we repent for our lack of hospitality to our immigrant sisters and brothers, and we pray for justice and inclusion.

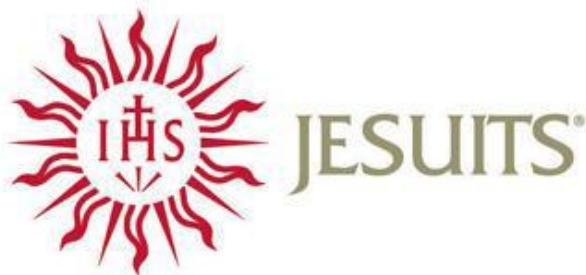
The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a Christian denomination, descendants of the pilgrims who sailed on the Mayflower seeking religious freedom in a new land. As such, we support the struggle of our sisters and brothers who have journeyed to this land seeking safety, opportunity and peace.

In a recent statement, UCC national officers released a statement in support of immigration reform efforts stating:

*We applaud the renewed efforts by President Obama and a bipartisan committee of senators to bring proposals for comprehensive immigration reform legislation to the Congress that will move our country beyond the strategy of simply securing our borders. The United Church of Christ has long supported compassionate reform in our country's approach to immigration and we will look to see that the recommendations being proposed will protect the human rights and dignity of our brothers and sisters.*

It is our sincere hope that you will be open to hearing the needs of our undocumented brothers and sisters and will allow mercy to accompany justice for the undocumented.

God is still speaking,  

*The U.S. Jesuit Conference commends Congress and the Obama Administration on making immigration reform a priority. We urge elected officials to move from the rhetoric of ‘America as a land of family values’ to the reality of a nation that enacts just immigration laws that protect and reunite families. The social and economic costs of separating children from their parents and incarcerating caregivers and wage earners grow higher each year. We, as Jesuits, because of our commitment to educating the children of migrants in our schools, serving migrant communities in our parishes, and offering deported men, women and children food and shelter on the border, see firsthand the costs of our current immigration laws. Therefore, the Jesuit Conference urges Congress to right size its family visa allocation and abolish 3 and 10 year bars which prolong family reunification and destroy familial bonds.*

- Rev. Thomas P. Greene, SJ, Secretary for Social and International Ministries, Jesuit Conference of the United States

**U.S. Jesuit Conference Welcomes Bi-Partisan Action for Immigration Reform, Urges Congress to Increase Accountability and Oversight for Agencies Charged with Enforcement and Protect Migrants’ Due Process Rights**

The U.S. Jesuit Conference welcomes bi-partisan initiatives designed to repair our broken and outdated immigration system. We support the principles outlined by Senators Coons, Blumenthal, Hirono, and Leahy in their February 5<sup>th</sup> “Dear Colleague” letter which calls for comprehensive immigration reform that embraces accountability, transparency, due process and equality under the law. It is our firm belief that these principles *are* the foundation of immigration reform that respects migrants’ rights and human dignity.

Through our ministries, we witness on a daily basis the tragic consequences of our nation’s current immigration laws and policies. We can and must do better. As our elected officials attempt to develop a viable immigration system, we urge them to place family unity, human dignity, transparency and accountability at the center of their debates.

We assess each immigration policy proposal by whether it adheres to the Catholic and American value of promoting and affirming human dignity. As such, we urge Congress to enact policies that prioritize family unity, increase oversight and transparency of immigration enforcement agencies, and ensure that immigrants’ due process rights are protected.

As established by the Justice for Immigrants campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and reiterated by the U.S. Jesuit Provincials in their joint letter to Congress in June 2010, a comprehensive and humane approach to immigration reform must:

- Establish a pathway to citizenship that ensures undocumented immigrants have access to full rights;
- Expedite family reunification and emphasize family unity for all immigrants;
- Restore due process, accountability, and transparency, particularly in the context of detention and deportation processes to foster humane enforcement of our immigration policies;
- Include policies that address the root causes of migration from developing countries; and
- Create a legal employment structure for future workers that protects both migrants and the U.S. citizen labor force.

While we are encouraged by the bipartisan tone of Senate leaders as they craft immigration reform legislation, we are concerned that proposals which make earned citizenship dependent upon a “secure border” will leave millions of lives in limbo and prolong indefinitely the irregular status of our undocumented brothers and sisters.

Our borders are best secured and our communities best kept safe by allotting sufficient family and employment visas, and ensuring humane, transparent, and accountable practices which foster trust between border communities and law enforcement entities.

We look forward to working with lawmakers as they develop legislation that meets the need for comprehensive and humane immigration reform.

# INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COALITION

## Interfaith Immigration Coalition Members

African American Ministers in Action  
American Baptist Churches, USA  
American Baptist Home Mission Societies  
American Friends Service Committee  
American Jewish Committee  
Bread for the World  
Church World Service  
Columban Center for Advocacy & Outreach  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
(Disciples of Christ)  
The Episcopal Church  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society  
Interfaith Worker Justice  
Irish Apostolate USA  
Islamic Information Center  
Jesuit Refugee Service  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.  
Washington Office  
Muslim Public Affairs Council  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of  
the Good Shepherd  
NETWORK, A Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Pax Christi USA  
PICO National Network  
Presbyterian Church USA, Immigration  
Issues Offices  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
Sojourners  
3P Human Security  
Unitarian Universalist Association of  
Congregations  
United Church of Christ, Justice and  
Witness Ministries  
United Methodist Church, General Board of  
Church and Society  
UNITED SIKHS  
World Relief

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC), a coalition of 35 national faith-based organizations, calls on the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress to reform of our broken immigration system. For more than a decade, the IIC has been working with hundreds of congregations, service providers, and faith leaders across the country to educate communities, oppose anti-immigrant legislation, and work toward humane immigration reform. In the past four years alone, the IIC network has organized more than a thousand prayer vigils, community forums, and rallies across the country in support of immigrants' rights. As a diverse coalition, we see this as an opportunity to raise issues that should be considered as Congress moves forward with fixing our nation's broken immigration system. The IIC calls on Congress to enact legislation that will:

### **Address the Causes of Migration**

People of faith have witnessed firsthand the suffering caused by extreme poverty, violent conflict, political and religious persecution, and environmental destruction that prompt individuals to leave their homes in search of a better life. U.S. foreign policy must seek smart, effective ways to help reshape financial systems that unduly burden vulnerable populations – including U.S. trade policies, international financial institutions, and local economies in sending countries – toward models that support those in need.

Our faiths compel us to seek to reduce the need for people to leave their homes in order to provide for their families. Rather than current policies which undermine sustainable livelihoods in sending countries, we should invest in environmentally sustainable economic development that preserves and defends the basic human rights of all people. These policies will provide alternatives to unauthorized immigration and reduce the need for costly border enforcement, detention, and deportation.

### **Create a Process for Undocumented Immigrants to Earn Citizenship**

Any meaningful reform of our immigration system must include a fair and generous process that allows undocumented immigrants and their families to earn lawful permanent residency with a pathway to citizenship. The workability of such a program should not be hindered by overly punitive criteria, such as mandating that immigrants leave the country or pay exorbitant fees, or by making the process conditional upon the implementation of enforcement measures. We urge members of Congress to oppose legislation that would curtail the nature of citizenship or restrict access to public benefits and child tax credits.

### **Keep Families Together**

Families are the basic unit of strong communities. Today, thousands of families are separated by our broken immigration system and should be reunited. Backlogs at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the limited number of visas force family members to choose between being separated for extended periods of time or illegally entering the country. A fair immigration system must improve and strengthen the family immigration process by recapturing visas lost to bureaucratic delay to reduce the current backlog; reclassifying spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents as immediate relatives; raising the per country visa limits from seven to fifteen percent of total admissions to reduce long wait times for certain nationalities; eliminating unlawful presence bars for the spouse, child, or parent of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents; admitting surviving family members of deceased family petitioners; and eliminating the cap on the total number of family-based visas available.

### **Enact the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act**

The faith community sees the DREAM Act as vital in fixing the broken immigration system. The DREAM Act has had many iterations, and the IIC calls

on Congress to enact robust and inclusive legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for individuals brought to the United States at age 16 or younger, are currently no older than 35 years of age, and who have graduated from high school, earned a GED in the U.S., or are currently in school. In addition to college and military service criteria, the IIC urges legislators to include volunteer service as a method by which DREAMers can maintain legal status and earn citizenship. DACA recipients should automatically qualify for any legalization process, and their time with DACA status should count toward any conditional status period under the DREAM Act.

#### **Protect Workers' Rights, Including Agricultural Workers**

There is a clear need to expand legal avenues for workers to migrate to the United States in a safe, authorized, and orderly manner. It is vital that these workers' rights are fully protected, including the right to bring their families with them, travel as needed, change their place of employment, and apply for lawful permanent residency and eventually citizenship.

Enactment of AgJobs (the *Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act*) would provide a legal, stable labor force by offering undocumented farmworkers the chance to earn legal status by meeting stringent work requirements and legal obligations. AgJobs would revise the H-2A agricultural guest-worker program to help employers fill critical agricultural positions that have been difficult to fill, sustaining agricultural industries while also protecting workers' rights.

As currently structured, the electronic employment verification (E-verify) program has proven detrimental to migrants, employers, and citizen employees. It leads to increased discrimination and unfair hiring and firing practices. For these reasons, and because we believe all workers benefit from the enforcement of health, safety, wage, and hour laws, as well as the right to peacefully organize, the IIC is opposed to the mandatory expansion of the E-verify program.

#### **Place Humanitarian Values at the Center of Enforcement Policies**

Enforcement policies must be made to be consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the United States to identify and prevent the entry of persons who commit dangerous crimes. Over the past twenty years, the federal government has dramatically increased border fence and other infrastructure construction, border patrol presence, immigration detention, and the deportation of immigrants, without regard to cost or effectiveness. Over \$10 billion of taxpayers' money has been spent on border security. It is now time to reform the broken immigration system. To truly decrease unauthorized immigration, the United States should improve access to a fair and humane legal immigration system, increasing and improving the efficiency of ports of entry, expanding visa availability, and eliminating application backlogs.

Border security has also proven to be environmentally irresponsible on many levels. It threatens already endangered species and damages public lands and interferes with business and land owners who operate and live along the border. We have also witnessed the desecration of sacred sites and the violation of religious freedom, as well as the unnecessary anguish of community members whose loved ones have suffered or died seeking entry into the United States. Above all else, enforcement policies must treat all individuals with respect and dignity. Citizens and migrants alike have the right to a fair and humane legal immigration system that respects the dignity of all persons, prioritizes the cohesiveness of families and communities, recognizes the economic contributions of immigrants, and upholds our moral obligations to provide refuge and welcome for the sojourner.

#### **Protect Refugees and Migrant Survivors of Violence**

The IIC encourages Congress to make life-changing improvements to the U.S. refugee resettlement program that would help refugees integrate in their new homes in the United States. Refugees have fled persecution in their home countries due to their race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and the United States has a rich tradition of welcoming refugees and helping them begin new lives. Bills such as the *Refugee Protection Act*, *Domestic Refugee Resettlement and Modernization Act*, and *Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act* include positive reforms that would not only help refugees, but provide important resources to the communities that welcome them.

The *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) has a long history of uniting lawmakers with the common purpose of protecting survivors of domestic violence. Congress has consistently recognized the vulnerability of non-citizen survivors of violence by enacting provisions in VAWA that enhance safety for survivors and their children and provide tools for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute crimes. In 2012, the House of Representatives passed a VAWA reauthorization bill that would undermine years of protections for immigrant victims and would actually make immigrants more vulnerable, endangering many lives. The IIC urges that any reauthorization of VAWA maintain and improve protections for migrant survivors, not weaken them.