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NETWORK Responds to New Immigration Proposals

Washington DC: NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice lobby, today issued the following statement about current congressional and administration recommendations for immigration reform:

NETWORK applauds President Obama's statement today about the urgent need for commonsense immigration reform. We also welcome yesterday's release of the congressional "Bipartisan Framework for Comprehensive Immigration Reform" as a valuable step in the right direction.

Sister Simone Campbell, NETWORK's Executive Director, stated, "We applaud this bipartisan effort to finally address our shattered immigration system. Seeing the president and Congress fundamentally in agreement on this critical issue is a breath of fresh air for a nation desperately hungry for evidence that our political parties can work together for the good of all. Democracy means bringing together diverse viewpoints for positive change, and this seems to be happening. We agree with the president that our nation is calling out for action and that the time is now."

At NETWORK, we have long championed a clear pathway to citizenship for immigrants. The congressional framework makes that possible, and we look forward to ironing out the details so that the path is not strewn with insurmountable obstacles.

Another NETWORK priority, family reunification, is also part of this proposal. This issue, like so many aspects of immigration reform, links directly to Catholic Social Teaching. Our faith teaches us that upholding the dignity and worth of each person is fundamental, and that we need to alleviate human suffering. As the president said, we are not just talking about policies here; this is about people. Separating families creates tremendous pain, and it is immoral.

We are pleased that the congressional proposal acknowledges that children brought to this country did not knowingly break the law, and they should not be forced to face the same requirements as adults. This is both humane and reasonable.

We also appreciate congressional recognition that our borders have become safe so we had reservations about the phrasing when the congressional proposal stated that the pathway to citizenship would be "contingent upon our success in securing our borders and addressing visa overstays." Our country has poured almost \$200 billion into creating our currently safe borders in recent years. We also do acknowledge that we need to better address the issue of people overstaying their visas.

As we have said repeatedly, immigrants strengthen our nation, both economically and socially. A well-functioning immigration system will serve the needs of our nation, our communities and our families. It also strengthens our future. Commonsense immigration reform is long overdue, and we can now all combine our efforts to make it a reality.

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NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes and lobbies for economic and social transformation. Founded in 1971 by 47 Catholic sisters, NETWORK is supported by thousands of groups and individuals committed to working for social and economic justice. For more information, see www.networklobby.org.