



Kino Border Initiative
Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera

U.S. Jesuit Network Welcomes Bi-Partisan Action for Immigration Reform, Reiterates Call to Address the Broken Immigration System

The U.S. Jesuit Conference, the Jesuit Refugee Service/USA and the Kino Border Initiative welcome the framework for comprehensive immigration reform released yesterday by a bi-partisan group of Senators. Likewise, we were encouraged by President Obama's remarks in Las Vegas, Nevada today calling for a "commonsense" approach to swiftly address an "out-of-date and badly broken immigration system."

Through our ministries, on a daily basis we witness the tragic consequences of our nation's flawed and outdated immigration laws and policies. We can and must do better. As our elected officials attempt to craft a viable immigration system, we urge them to place family unity, human dignity, transparency and accountability at the center of their debates. Very Rev. Thomas H. Smolich, S.J., President of the Jesuit Conference of the United States stressed, "We assess each immigration policy proposal by whether it adheres to the Catholic and American value of promoting and affirming human dignity." As was 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 that 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 yesterday's release and its call for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented individuals, we are concerned that earned legalization in the plan is contingent upon a "secure border." We caution that the concept of achieving an impervious border *before* implementing legalization will leave millions of lives in limbo and prolong indefinitely the irregular status of our undocumented brothers and sisters. A genuine understanding of the realities faced by border communities will yield the best policy. We contend that our borders are best secured and our communities best kept safe by humane, transparent, and accountable practices which foster trust between border communities and law enforcement entities. Said Rev. Sean Carroll, S.J., Executive Director of the bi-national Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Arizona, "Law enforcement agencies like CBP and ICE must take local community input into account for true security and respect for human rights to become a reality along the U.S./Mexico border."

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