

****Press Conference Audio Available [Here](#)****

National Clergy, Labor Leaders Urge ‘Gang of Eight’ to Protect and Promote Family-Focused Immigration Reform

(Washington, DC) – Today, prominent faith and labor leaders held a telephonic press conference strongly urging the Senate Gang of 8 and fellow lawmakers to protect family values and reject the reduction of family visas. In advance of next week’s release of the Senate Gang of 8 immigration framework, speakers on the call discussed why the labor and faith communities jointly oppose framework proposals that would harm aspiring American families and the economy by limiting family visas.

“To depend on immigrants for some of the hardest work in this country and then to deny them the opportunity to be reunited with their families is nothing less than a sin, said **Bishop Minerva Carcaño**, Resident Bishop of the **United Methodist Church, Los Angeles Conference**. “It is a sin that places immigrants in a sub-category of existence without the presence, without the love and support of those that they call family. Immigration reform that is just must include the reunification of families. Immigrants should not be used as mere economic tools in our struggling economy. They are human beings of sacred worth just like any of the rest of us – worthy of food, home, education and a good future -- and they are worthy of being able to live their lives with their families at their side.”

Joining with the faith community’s endorsement of pro-family immigration policies, labor leaders spoke to why strong families are key to America’s future economic vitality.

“Some are trying to pit economic interests against family,” said **AFL-CIO** President **Richard Trumka**. “They say that ‘on merit’ brothers and sisters and children and spouses are worth less than people employers prefer. The labor movement doesn’t buy that for one second. The idea that family unity stands in opposition to economic growth is completely backwards. Strong families are critical to our economic growth.”

Bishop Kirk Smith of the **Episcopal Diocese of Arizona** called on Senators McCain and Flake to recognize the inherent worth the family bond and not perpetuate family separation.

“I don’t believe that the Senate can restrict the definition of family. In any reform of our immigration laws it is critical that all families be kept together, and that U.S. citizens retain their right to sponsor their children and loved ones. Today, I ask Senator Flake and Senator McCain to fight for the needs of families across Arizona and across the country by protecting the family immigration system.”

Speaking from a shared set of values, both faith and labor leaders encouraged all lawmakers to keep pro-family, pro-unity immigration reform policies front and center in the ongoing immigration reform debate.

“Family-based immigration has kept our social fabric strong and helped build this nation,” said **Kevin Appleby**, Director of Migration Policy and Public Affairs, **U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops**. “It would ignore our history to forsake it.”