



Franciscan Action Network

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

P.O. Box 29106 • Washington, DC 20017 • 202-527-7575 • 1-888-364-3388 (toll free) • 202-527-7576 (fax)

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McConnell and all Representatives and Senators:

Members of Franciscan Action Network (FAN), representing Franciscan Sisters, Friars, Brothers and Laity in every state, have actively called for many years—too many years—for common sense immigration reform with a path to citizenship. Our work is rooted in the Gospel call to love our neighbor, in Catholic social teaching about human dignity and justice for all, and in our Franciscan values of compassion and peace with justice. Our faith calls us to stand with immigrant families who face threats of detention and deportation. In the absence of congressional action to mend our broken immigration system, we have advocated for the President to use his broad legal and constitutional authority, temporary as it is, to provide relief for as many families as possible who live in fear of deportation. As you consider proposed legislation, we urge you to reject any bills that would negatively impact immigrants in your home states and districts as well as across the country.

We welcomed the Senate votes on DHS funding which failed due to immigration riders, and we urge a clean DHS funding bill. We know young people in our parishes and communities who have benefitted from the DACA program and are flourishing in their various jobs. It would be cruel to take their hopes and dreams away from them by ending DACA. Because the program has proven successful, we advocate for DACA expansion and introduction of a DAPA program (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans). Since these efforts are temporary, we urge you to work for passage of real immigration reform that includes an earned path to citizenship.

We have serious concerns about H.R. 399, the Secure Our Borders First Act of 2015, introduced by Rep. McCaul which he says is designed “to transfer assets from theatre of war and redeploy them to the Southwest border.” Our southern border is not a war zone and we should not make it one. Under this legislation, individuals living along the border would face increased scrutiny and racial profiling from police and Border Patrol which could violate constitutional rights under the Fourth Amendment. The bill also ignores the fact that many individuals have legitimate claims to asylum. Any border bill should address the need for Border Patrol accountability due to increased problems with corruption and use of force. Even border communities see H.R. 399 as an ineffective approach and a waste of taxpayer money. In Texas, some business and economic development leaders have pushed back against the bill.

FAN is also strongly opposed to H.R. 2278, the SAFE (Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement) Act introduced last year, and will oppose any similar legislation to expand interior enforcement efforts. Faith communities have particular concern about this legislation which would unduly punish not only immigrants by creating new crime categories, but also members of our communities who assist them.

We also oppose any legislation that would roll back critical anti-trafficking protections for children and other individuals seeking protection from persecution and violence in their home countries. Such bills include the so-called "Protection of Children Act," (H.R. 5143), which would roll back TVPRA protections and other safeguards for vulnerable children, and "The Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act" (H.R. 5137) introduced in the last congress.

We hope to see legislation from this congress that offers genuine immigration reform that protects families, children and others seeking refuge and does away with excessive border enforcement, unwarranted detention and deportation, legislation that provides for an earned path to citizenship for millions of immigrants who already are a positive presence in our communities, places of worship and our work force. Do not be a congress that tears families apart, but one that honors our country's values by providing immigration policies that treat our friends and neighbors with dignity and respect.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick J. Carolan".

Patrick Carolan
Executive Director