



National Council of Jewish Women

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February 18, 2015

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

For 120 years, the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) has been involved in service and advocacy on behalf of new immigrants. Today, we work for comprehensive, humane, and equitable immigration and naturalization laws, policies, and practices that expedite legal status for more individuals. A comprehensive reform approach should provide opportunities for hard-working undocumented immigrants to earn legal status and citizenship, aid in family unification by reducing waiting periods that keep immigrant families apart, and establish humane border policies.

Our faith values direct us to stand with immigrant families and call for an end to the needless deportation of individuals and families contributing to our communities and economy. As you consider upcoming legislation and amendments to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill, we urge you to reject legislation that would negatively impact immigrant communities in your states and districts.

As the Jewish community is particularly aware, our country has a long history of reuniting families who are looking for new and prosperous opportunities or who seek protection in the United States. Additionally, the Torah directs us to welcome the stranger a total of 36 times, more than any other commandment. NCJW remains committed to a legislative solution to the broken US immigration system, but we appreciate the great strides made towards a more just and equitable system under President Obama through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), eradicating Secure Communities, and expanding access to legal status for close relatives of US citizens and legal immigrants already living in the US. We urge all members of the House and Senate to reject legislation, including amendments to the DHS appropriations bill, that would stop, interfere or weaken DACA and Deferred Action for the Parents of Americans (DAPA) programs and other provisions made possible through recent executive orders on immigration.¹ The amendments currently attached to the DHS appropriations bill would strike a blow against progress toward permanent immigration reform, and endanger millions of hardworking immigrant families.

Specifically, we are very concerned about HR 399, the Secure Our Borders First Act of 2015 introduced by Rep. McCaul (R-TX 10) which is designed "to transfer assets from theatre of war and redeploy them to the Southwest border," in the words of Rep. McCaul himself. Under this legislation, individuals living along the border would face increased inspection and racial profiling from police, Border Patrol, and even the National Guard, which could violate constitutional rights under the Fourth Amendment. The bill's "operational control" goals are unrealistic and ignore the fact that many individuals, including women and children fleeing gang violence, labor and sex trafficking, and domestic violence, have legitimate claims to asylum. HR 399 also lacks

¹ www.whitehouse.gov/immigrationaction

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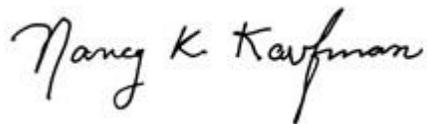
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accountability mechanisms that are sorely needed for Border Patrol, which has seen increased problems with corruption, escalation of force, and systemic abuse of migrants as it has doubled in size since 2004.² Any border bill should address the need for Border Patrol accountability, with short term custody standards and a viable complaint process for victims of abuse. Instead of advancing this extreme legislation, we should work together to help revitalize border communities, not militarize them.

NCJW is also strongly opposed to HR 2278, the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE Act) introduced last year, and any similar legislation to expand interior immigration enforcement efforts. Communities of faith oppose legislation that would create new crimes for immigrants and the individuals who provide them aid including clergy; expand immigration detention; encourage state and local law enforcement officials to collaborate with immigration enforcement efforts; or decrease protections and immigration relief for certain migrant groups.³ Faith groups are also unanimously opposed to legislation that would rollback critical anti-trafficking protections for children and individuals seeking protection from persecution, including the misnamed “Protection of Children Act” (HR 5143) and The Asylum Reform and Border Protection Act (HR 5137) introduced in the last congress. These bills would roll back the bipartisan Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, signed into law by President Bush, and would result in children being returned back into hands of traffickers, gangs, and others who seek to exploit them.

Our nation urgently needs true immigration reform with a path to citizenship for the millions of immigrants now residing and working in the US and who make significant contributions to our economy. Rather than legislation that would tear families apart, dash the hopes of young people and parents of US citizen and permanent resident children, and throw money at the border and enforcement efforts that have proven detrimental, we urge Congress to support immigration policies that welcome the stranger, and extend the opportunity for success to future generations of immigrants. If you have any questions about these issues or our positions, please contact Madeline Shepherd at (202) 375-5063 or madeline@ncjwdc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy K. Kaufman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nancy K. Kaufman
CEO, National Council of Jewish Women

² <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/border-patrol-the-green-monster-112220.html#ixzz3Q8y0EMvM>

³ <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/say-no-to-the-safe-act/>