

Border Working Group

A coalition of faith-based organizations seeking justice at the border



May 5, 2009

Dear immigration staffer,

The Border Working Group (BWG) is a coalition of faith-centered and human rights groups based in Washington, D.C., many with partners in the border region. In dialogue and collaboration with colleagues on the U.S. - Mexico border, the BWG works to see that the policies of the U.S. government toward all migrants are based on respect for human and civil rights, and an acknowledgement of the vital role migrants and border communities play in strengthening the economy and security of the United States.

Despite the focus on the economy, the new administration and 111th Congress offer the people of the U.S. a valuable opportunity for civil and productive debate on immigration reform and development of humane and sensible approaches towards U.S.-Mexico border policy.

Of course, we and our partners share your concerns regarding the growing violence plaguing Mexico, particularly in the Mexican border region. We applaud recent efforts by the administration and Congress to consider and adopt measures that reflect an acknowledgment of U.S. responsibility in drug cartel related violence, particularly to support efforts to engage in more robust investigations of arms trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering and corruption. A comprehensive approach to these challenges is critical. We believe that implementation of immigration reform must allow for safe, legal channels for migrants to enter the United States and bring the millions of undocumented migrants out of the shadows.

Enforcement-only and enforcement-first policies have been tried before and have failed to enhance national and community security in the border region. The BWG encourages a comprehensive approach to security that takes into consideration those most vulnerable to and impacted by border policies: migrants and border communities on both sides of the border. This approach would include:

- Immigration reform measures that include a path for earned citizenship for the millions of undocumented families working and living in the United States, and allow for safe and legal channels for families to be reunified.
- Transparent and thorough consultation with border communities in the development and implementation of border policies.
- A moratorium of the construction of the U.S.-Mexico border wall.
- Measures to ensure that migrants detained and held in detention at the border are treated with respect and provided with their basic needs and due process rights.
- Measures to curb the flow of arms from the U.S. into Mexico, expand drug treatment and prevention programs in the U.S., and support efforts to strengthen judicial institutions and human rights in Mexico.

As people of faith, we urge you to act on these issues. Now is the time for change.

We hope to share further information on these and other border issues. Please contact Susan Thompson, at susanstarrsthompson@juno.com for more information.

Sincerely,

Missionary Oblates Justice and Peace Office – Washington D.C.

Medical Mission Sisters – Alliance for Justice

Columban Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns