

# Interfaith Statement

## ON IMMIGRATION CONCERNS

*“The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”*

—The Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 19:33-34

*“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.... What you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me.”*

—The New Testament, Matthew 25:35, 40-41

*“Serve God...and do good to...orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing].”*

—The Qur’an, 4:36

*“The guest is a representative of God.”*

—The Hindu Taittiriya Upanishad, 1.11.2

**A**s members of the faith community, we join together to call upon President Bush and our elected officials in Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation that establishes a safe and humane immigration system consistent with our values. While we support the government's right to enforce the law and protect the national security interests of the United States, we will oppose an enforcement-only or enforcement-first approach, which merely creates an illusion of safety and control while neglecting the practical and humanitarian solutions that our national immigration crisis requires.

We call for immigration reform because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of an outmoded system. We see and hear the suffering of immigrant families who have lost loved ones to death in the desert or immigrants themselves who have experienced exploitation in the workplace or abuse at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers and others. In our view, changes to the U.S. legal immigration system would help put an end to this suffering, which offends the dignity of all human beings.

We call upon our elected officials to enact legislation that includes the following:

- An opportunity for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria and, over time, pursue an option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens;
- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;
- The creation of legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner with their rights fully protected; and
- Border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of identifying and preventing entry of terrorists and dangerous criminals, as well as pursuing the legitimate task of implementing American immigration policy.

We urge our elected officials to refrain from further negative rhetoric about immigrants and conduct the immigration reform debate in a civil and respectful manner, mindful not to blame immigrants for our social and economic ills or for the atrocities committed by the few who have carried out acts of terrorism.

As faith-based leaders and organizations, we call attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and pursue policies that uphold the human dignity of each person, all of whom are made in the image of God. We engage the immigration issue with the goal of fashioning an immigration system that facilitates legal status and family unity in the interest of serving the God-given dignity and rights of every individual. It is our collective prayer that the legislative process will produce a just immigration system of which our nation of immigrants can be proud.

American Jewish Committee  
Anti-Defamation League  
Church World Service  
Immigration and Refugee Program  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
The Episcopal Church  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society  
Hindu American Foundation  
Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
Irish Apostolate USA  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs  
Jewish Funds for Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ  
Latin American Committee of the Loretto Community  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty  
National Council of Churches of Christ  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Sisters of the Good Shepherd of the United States  
Sojourners/Call to Renewal  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Global Ministries  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
World Relief

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