



Sisters of the Good Shepherd

The National
Advocacy Center

May 16, 2007

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, I am writing to express our concern over the current status of the immigration debate and reaffirm our support for comprehensive immigration reform. As efforts to negotiate a compromise continue, the National Advocacy Center strongly urges you to uphold principles of comprehensive immigration reform passed by the Senate last year and push for legislation that is holistic, workable, and that values families, workers, and our nation's immigrant heritage.

Along with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, many other faith-based organizations, and a wide range of community, labor, and business groups throughout the country, the National Advocacy Center believes that *any immigration legislation must include*:

- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to promote family reunification by significantly reducing waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be together;
- An earned legalization program for the undocumented population that is workable and includes a path to citizenship which is fair and achievable;
- The creation of more responsive 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 that prevents their exploitation and assures them due process;
- 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 enforcing our laws.
- The restoration of due process protections for immigrants taken away by the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA); and
- Policies which address the root causes of migration, such as economic development in sending countries.

These principles are currently best incorporated in the STRIVE Act of 2007 (H.R.1645), which we believe offers the right structure for successful reform, despite some problematic enforcement and due process provisions. We encourage the Senate to use this bill or S. 1348 (previously S. 2611), last year's bipartisan compromise legislation, as the starting point for debate and commit to working with you to improve upon these bills.

In contrast, we are deeply troubled by the Administration's most recent immigration proposals and reports that some of these are being incorporated into a potential compromise bill. These proposals would undercut family unity and reunification through cuts to family visas and restrictions on family participation in new worker programs, impose fines and wait-times for legalization that would discourage participation and make the plan unworkable, and fail to protect current and future workers. Rather than fixing our broken immigration system, such proposals would create more chaos and incentives for abuse. The National Advocacy Center strongly urges you to reject these proposals and to embrace the comprehensive reform principles outlined above.

As a faith-based organization, the National Advocacy Center approaches the issue of immigration not only from a practical, but also a moral perspective. The Biblical call to “welcome the stranger” and to “love our neighbors” has generated a rich Catholic social tradition of solidarity with immigrants grounded in a firm belief in the dignity of every person. We support the rule of law, but believe our current immigration system is itself flawed and broken. This background and the suffering of immigrant families related to us by Good Shepherd Sisters and programs throughout the country compel the National Advocacy Center push for a more just immigration system. A comprehensive approach that puts families first, provides a reasonable path to citizenship for hardworking immigrants and their families, creates viable legal channels for future immigrants that include strong worker protections, and embraces a holistic vision of security that respects human dignity is the only way to achieve this goal. We urge to support comprehensive, realistic, and compassionate immigration reform.

Sincerely,

Alison L. Prevost, *Lobbyist*

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