

CWS Statement on Comprehensive Immigration Reform

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January 25, 2007

With the commencement of the 110th congress, Church World Service urges the House and Senate to legislate a comprehensive solution to America's broken immigration system. As a faith-based, humanitarian organization concerned with the equitable treatment of all human beings, we know that reform can maintain national security while preserving our country's legacies of welcoming the stranger and treating all people with dignity and respect. We continue to call for reform that will:

- ◆ **Improve our family-based immigration system** to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited.
- ◆ **Create legal avenues for immigrants to safely and legally work** in the United States, with their employee rights fully protected. Reforms should increase the accessibility of legal ports of entry and repair the administrative backlog of immigration applications that prevents people who want to enter the country legally from doing so in a realistic timeframe. With these mechanisms in place, the border patrol would be able to focus solely on threats to national security.
- ◆ **Provide an opportunity for earned legalization** for all persons who already contribute to our economy through social security, sales tax and other mechanisms and dedicate themselves to learning English, working and paying taxes. We do not support blanket amnesty, but instead call for earned legalization as a necessary way to keep families together, remedy the abuse of undocumented workers and enhance governmental awareness of those living in this country.
- ◆ **Implement smart, targeted enforcement, not fences.** Our national security should be enhanced through workplace enforcement, more accessible legal ports of entry and earned legalization, rather than policies that have failed in the past such as fences and the militarization of the border. Legislators should also recognize that some employers encourage illegal immigration in order to abuse undocumented employees. Reforms should enable employers to verify applicants' immigration status and hold them accountable for hiring undocumented workers.
- ◆ **Mandate that domestic law enforcement agencies ensure the safety of all persons**, rather than attempt to serve as immigration enforcement, which hinders justice for immigrants and citizens alike and can result in criminals targeting immigrants who will not report crimes due to fear of deportation. Also, reforms should protect and not punish individuals and organizations which act as Good Samaritans to help people without regard to their immigration status.
- ◆ **Safeguard asylum seekers** by ensuring them a fair legal process without penalizing them with increased, unnecessary bureaucracy.

Immigration legislation must take into account the lives of over fifty million American families impacted by border policies; economic and trade repercussions; the feasibility of reform and costs associated with its implementation; and the impact it will have on both domestic and international political climates. We call for both the House and Senate to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill that will be just, humane and compassionate.