



## Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

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June 2, 2009

Honorable Mike Honda  
United States House of Representatives  
1713 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Honda:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Migration, I write to offer our views on the Reuniting Families Act, which you have indicated you will introduce in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. As you know, the USCCB supported H.R. 6638, similar legislation that you introduced during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. Unfortunately, however, while the bishops support many of the provisions in the Reuniting Families Act, your decision to include in the bill the Uniting American Families Act (UAFA), which would provide marriage-like immigration benefits to same sex relationships, makes it impossible for the bishops to support this year's version of your bill.

Family reunification has represented the cornerstone of the U.S. immigration system, and should remain its central tenet in the future. Throughout U.S. history, immigrant families have helped build our nation by starting businesses, strengthening local communities, and helping to integrate their members and others into American society. In our view, our country should enhance opportunities for families to remain together and should resist proposals which would erode the family-based immigration system. That is why we so strongly supported H.R. 6638 during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. However, including UAFA in the Reuniting Families Act would erode the institution of marriage and family by according marriage-like immigration benefits to same sex relationships, a position that is contrary to the very nature of marriage which pre-dates the Church and the state.

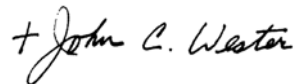
As a result of your decision to include UAFA in your 111<sup>th</sup> Congress version of the Reuniting Families Act, the bishops have instead strongly endorsed S. 1085, the Senate version of the Reuniting Families Act. Introduced in the Senate by Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), S. 1085 would improve the family-based immigration system by removing the annual cap on the number of visas which allow immediate family members to reunite with legal permanent residents. It is extremely important that barriers that keep the nuclear family—husband, wife, and child—divided are removed as soon as possible. The legislation achieves this goal while preserving the ability of other close family members, including siblings of United States citizens, to reunite with their loved ones and without eroding marriage and family.

Despite our nation's traditional emphasis on family immigration, too often our current system keeps families apart for years. The USCCB strongly believes that the U.S. immigration system should be reformed. Positive changes in the family-based immigration categories, such as

those included in S. 1085, should be a central feature of any comprehensive immigration reform effort.

We applaud your long commitment to reforming the United States family-based immigration system and stand ready to work with you to achieve urgently needed reforms to that system. We do not, however, support providing marriage-like benefits to same-sex relationships. Consequently, we cannot support the version of the Reuniting Families Act that you are contemplating introducing in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Wester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend John C. Wester  
Bishop of Salt Lake City, Utah  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration