



USCCB Committee on Migration

C/O MIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES

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STATEMENT OF MOST REVEREND GERALD R. BARNES BISHOP OF SAN BERNARDINO CHAIRMAN, USCCB COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

January 25, 2007

On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I welcome the remarks of President Bush in the 2007 State of the Union address expressing support for the passage of comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Comprehensive immigration reform is clearly a high priority for our nation and should be high on the agenda of the 110th Congress.

The issue of immigration reform is ripe for federal action. The nation has debated this controversial and complex social issue for several years now. In part because of inaction at the federal level, states and localities are moving to adopt their own laws in this area. Americans throughout the country strongly desire that Congress solve the problem of illegal immigration.

From a humanitarian perspective, there is even more urgency for action. Migrants continue to be subject to exploitation by unscrupulous employers, abuse by smugglers, and death in the American desert. As the recent raids on meatpacking plants demonstrate, families are subject to separation and dislocation. As a moral matter, our nation can no longer accept the work and taxes of migrant laborers without offering them legal protection.

The U.S. Catholic bishops support a comprehensive immigration bill that includes the following elements:

- An earned legalization program which allows undocumented persons to earn permanent residency;
- A worker program which protects foreign-born workers and safeguards against the displacement of U.S. workers;
- Family-based immigration reform which reduces waiting times for family reunification;
- Restoration of due process protections for immigrants; and
- Policies which address the root causes of migration.

Although immigration elicits strong views, our elected officials must work together in a bipartisan manner to repair our flawed immigration system. We look forward to working with President Bush and Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation during 2007.

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