

March 13, 2006

Senator
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator,

In the coming weeks, the Senate is expected to take up the crucial matter of immigration reform. It could well be that 2006 is a milestone year in the history of U.S. immigration policy. Therefore, we seek your support for comprehensive immigration reform that: 1) deals effectively with undocumented immigrants working and living in the U.S.; 2) provides for the future flow of workers and close family members; 3) devises tailored, targeted, effective enforcement of more realistic policies; and 4) supports the successful integration of newcomers in the communities where they settle.

The Episcopal Church recognizes the importance of more secure borders, but we also believe that our nation must not abandon its commitment to principles of justice and fairness toward those who come to our shores for legitimate reasons. Anything less cannot work and it is not true reform.

The Senate inherits from the House of Representatives H.R. 4437 that neglects the principles to which the Episcopal Church and most faith-based communities subscribe. The Sensenbrenner/King bill focuses exclusively on enforcement and neglects the practical elements of comprehensive reform.

To truly fix our broken system we need to bring people out of the shadows and onto a path toward permanent legal status; we need wider legal channels so workers can come to the U.S. with a visa and labor rights; and we need to ensure that American families are reunited with their loved ones in a timely fashion. Restrictionist policies will result in forcing millions into an underground existence that is inhumane, invites worker exploitation, and does nothing to enhance national security.

It is vital to act now and appeal to the best in the citizens of our nation who value the contributions of immigrants to our common life. To wait will mean leaving parts of our economy vulnerable, families separated, and our border plagued by death, chaos and lawlessness as desperate neighbors look for a better life for themselves and their families. We must have control over immigration in a post-9/11 world with a system that allows for a safe, legal, and orderly flow of people across our borders on our terms.

The stakes are high. By embracing the principles expressed in the Episcopal Church resolution and that are embodied in the bipartisan legislation offered by Senators McCain and Kennedy, you can help bring about a balanced, practical, and just immigration system for our nation. We thank you for your commitment to a secure and democratic vision for America's future.

Sincerely yours,

The Rt. Rev. Charles E. Bennison, Jr.
Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

The Rt. Rev. Carolyn T. Irish
Episcopal Diocese of Utah

The Rt. Rev. Alan Scarfe
Episcopal Diocese of Iowa

The Rt. Rev. Kirk Stevan Smith, PhD
Episcopal Diocese of Arizona

The Rt. Rev. Robert Manning Moody
Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

The Rt. Rev. Thomas Clark Ely
Episcopal Diocese of Vermont

The Rt. Rev. William E. Swing, DD
Episcopal Diocese of California

The Rt. Rev. Mark S. Sisk, DD
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The Rt. Rev. Roy F. Cederholm, Jr.
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The Rt. Rev. Gayle Elizabeth Harris
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