

STATEMENT FROM BISHOP SISK REGARDING IMMIGRATION REFORM LEGISLATION
MARCH 11, 2006

Today I call upon all people of good will to support our legislators as they work for humane immigration reform. As Christians, we are a faith tradition that is built upon the immigration of the people of Israel and the importance of reaching out to strangers. We are a faith tradition that is called to love our neighbor, treating them as we ourselves would want to be treated. We are also a part of a faith tradition that beginning with Moses and the prophets and continuing through Martin Luther King Jr and Archbishop Desmond Tutu calls for the just treatment of all people.

I am deeply concerned about aspects of the legislation recently passed by the House of Representatives (H.R. 4437 "Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act" - Sensenbrenner-King). This Bill includes many provisions that are antithetical to our Judeo-Christian tradition and mission. These provisions literally and figuratively create walls: walls of mortar and walls of fear. These walls will only foster fear, poverty and hopelessness.

I am troubled by provisions of the legislation that would require congregations and other social organizations to ask immigrants for legal documentation before providing assistance, and would penalize them if they refuse to do so.

As part of a world-wide communion, the Episcopal Diocese of New York is committed to building bridges of hope among people. Indeed, it is the very essence of who we are, and who we are called to be. The Churches and institutions of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, a diocese of immigrants throughout its history, could not in conscience comply with any legislative provision that forbids us to act in faith, love and charity toward our brothers and sisters because of their immigration status.

The ordination vows, which every priest and deacon of this Church have taken, prevent them from withholding the ministry of Word and Sacrament to any who call upon them in a time of need, regardless of their status before the law. The hope of life and freedom we have received in Christ demands of us no less.

The Rt. Rev. Mark Sisk
XV Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York