



Migration and Refugee Services
Office of Migration and Refugee Policy

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February 22, 2006

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned Catholic organizations, write to urge that you support the principles and provisions embodied in S. 1033, the *Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005*, as the Senate prepares to take up comprehensive immigration reform legislation. We also strongly urge you to oppose the inclusion of H.R. 4437, the *Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*, and its provisions in the legislation that the Senate takes up.

As you know, the *Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005* is bipartisan legislation that was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA). This legislation represents a comprehensive, bipartisan approach to immigration reform that would repair our broken immigration system. In contrast, H.R. 4437, which the House of Representatives passed last December, is a punitive and overly-broad enforcement-only approach to immigration reform which we believe would unduly harm legal immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, trafficking victims, victims of domestic violence, children, public charities, and many communities in our country without solving our current immigration problems.

The *Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005* would reform our legal immigration system by creating an “earned” adjustment program for undocumented migrants who currently reside in the United States. It also would establish a temporary worker program with worker protections to provide legal avenues for future flows of migrant workers. And it would make changes to our family preference system that would reduce the current lengthy waiting times for family reunification.

We believe that the principles and provisions contained in S. 1033 reflect the most efficient and effective approach to immigration reform. The bill examines and makes changes to all aspects of the current system. The bill’s “earned” adjustment program would address the plight of undocumented workers without providing them an “amnesty.” And the properly constructed temporary worker program in the bill, when combined with its changes to the family preference system, would create legal avenues for migrants who seek to enter our nation to work or be reunited with family members.

Moreover, S. 1033 includes several enforcement provisions which would strengthen our nation’s ability to secure the border in an effective and humane manner, including increased technological resources and a requirement that a National Strategy on Border Security be developed. S. 1033 would help manage migration by creating a safe, orderly, and legal system, ultimately a far more effective approach to managing security concerns.

In contrast, H.R. 4437 relies solely on counterproductive and over-the-top penalties, as well as overly-broad and inefficient so-called enforcement measures, to address our immigration problems. Indeed, the problems with H.R. 4437 are so numerous that it would take a separate letter of great length to address all of them. Among its many harsh provisions that concern us are those that would criminalize

undocumented presence in the United States, making it a felony punishable by more than a year in prison, and a provision that could make it a criminal offense for charitable organizations to assist undocumented migrants. This latter provision could potentially place church workers, health-care workers, or other Good Samaritans at risk of criminal prosecution and imprisonment for acts of kindness, even in emergency situations.

As you consider the issue of immigration reform, we ask that you support the comprehensive solution to our nation's immigration crisis found in the *Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005*. As a nation of immigrants, we can achieve an immigration system which upholds the rule of law, respects the basic human rights and dignity of the migrant, and ensures our national security.

Sincerely,

Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Health Association
Catholic Relief Services
Irish Apostolate USA
Jesuit Conference
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops