

U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Statement on Immigration September, 2009

Statement

We, the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership Council and the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, compelled by the Gospel and by our heritage to be responsive to the "dear neighbor" without distinction, call on President Obama and the 2009-10 Congress to enact immigration policy that is both just and comprehensive. We believe that this policy must include:

- **A plan for addressing applicant backlogs for permanent residence, with family unity as a priority**
- **An effective program for temporary workers**
- **A realistic path to earned legalization**
- **Restoration of due process protections and reformed detention policies for those detained in the immigration system**
- **Effective border security that recognizes the human rights of all people**
- **A process whereby students who are children of undocumented families can earn a college degree and become gainfully employed. We must remember that these children are here through no fault of their own; and their only desire is to become a citizen of the nation in which they have grown up.**

Impact on Women and Children

Immigration impacts women and children deeply since they comprise more than half of undocumented people in the United States. Because of this and the hardship they endure, immigration reform needs a strong family reunification component so that mothers and children will not be separated. Also included must be provisions for health care for the children beyond the one year which is allowed at this time.

Talking Points

1) **A plan for addressing applicant backlogs for permanent residence**, with family unity as a priority.

Immigrant families contribute to our nation and help form new generations of Americans. The US family-based immigration system, which helps keep families together is in urgent need of reform. Some families wait five years or more, and more than 8 years for spouses to reunite with each other and for parents to reunite with minor children.

2) **Effective Worker Program:** Job portability--Workers should be able to move between jobs without losing their immigrant status; Family unity which allows immediate family members to join worker (giving family member work authorization. . . many times workers need to have two jobs to make ends meet); Enforcement mechanism and resources to assure worker rights; Visa should be renewable as long as the workers meet the requirements.

3) **Realistic path to citizenship.** . . earned legalization should be workable, achievable and fair.

4) **Dream ACT** – Children of undocumented families can earn a college degree and become gainfully employed. We must remember that these children are here through no fault of their own; and their only desire is to become contributing members of their society and citizens of the nation in which they have grown up.

Action Steps

Comprehensive Immigration Reform has not yet been drafted or introduced in the 111th Congress. However two pieces of legislation are now pending.

Write to your Congress person and ask them to sponsor the legislation below as a step to Comprehensive Immigration reform.

The DREAM Act (H.R. 1751 – S. 729) – The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act has been introduced in previous Congresses but has not yet passed. It is an important piece of legislation that offers a path to legal status for those who were brought to the United States as children and know the U.S. as their only home.

Family Unity Act (S. 1085) – This legislation would permit families to be together.

For more information visit www.networklobby.org