

Evangelical Leaders Sound Off on Immigration Reform

On Monday a bipartisan group of senators released a framework for broad **immigration reform** that includes a conditional path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. The senators' framework emerges two weeks after the Evangelical Immigration Table, an unprecedented coalition of evangelical leaders across the political spectrum that started in June 2012, launched the "I Was a Stranger" immigration prayer challenge.

Following are statements by these Evangelical Immigration Table leaders:

The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference: "The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference commends and applauds the principles proposed by United States senators committed to finding a solution to the immigration crisis. As a member of the Evangelical Immigration Table, the NHCLC stands committed to an outcome that reconciles conviction with compassion, security with integration, all while recognizing the image of God in citizen and immigrant alike. Accordingly, while we continue to engage in prophetic activism, we also continue in our 'I Was a Stranger' prayer challenge. For we understand that prayer and activism result in one thing: justice in the name of Jesus!"

Mat Staver, founder and chairman, Liberty Counsel, and chief counsel, NHCLC: "I applaud the bipartisan group of Senators working together to reform our broken immigration system. We need to secure our borders, enforce our laws, and provide opportunities for undocumented immigrants to come out of the shadows and participate in the American dream."

Leith Anderson, president, National Association of Evangelicals: “Now is the time for immigration reform. We’ve settled too long for a broken system, and now the nation is ready for changes that are just, reasonable and compassionate. Let’s make immigration the issue where our political parties can come together and do what is right.”

Stephan Bauman, president and CEO, World Relief: “We applaud the Senate’s courage and bipartisan nature in proposing a set of principles for immigration reform legislation. The principles include much-needed reforms to our outdated immigration system, and we urge the Senate to pass reforms that include an earned pathway to eventual citizenship, strong support for family unity, and provisions that would facilitate the integration of immigrants into our society in partnership with the faith-based community. We hope this step forward by the Senate today will lead to a robust and open political process for immigration reform, one we can celebrate within the greater evangelical community. We look forward to working with members in both the Senate and House in coming months to address this critical issue.”

Noel Castellanos, CEO, Christian Community Development Association: “The leaders of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), which represents hundreds of local organizations working in immigrant communities throughout the nation, applaud the principles released by Senate leaders working to fix our broken immigration. The faith community is ready to stand by a proposal that respects the dignity of the 11 million men, women and children trapped in our current system; provides a fair integration into our U.S. society; and assures the security and prosperity of our nation. We are ready to work together to get immigration reform passed!”

Reverend Luis Cortés, president, Esperanza: “We find ourselves in a defining moment, a moment when people of all backgrounds,

political persuasions and religious convictions are acknowledging that we must solve this civil and human rights crisis in our country once and for all. We support this bipartisan effort and the immigration reform principles put forth in the senators' proposal, and we thank those who are leading the effort for doing their part. May they experience the full support of a nation and a government ready to fix the broken system we have lived with for far too long."

Robert Gittelson, president, Conservatives for Comprehensive Immigration Reform: "It is encouraging that the set of principles released by this important and influential group of senators is very much in line with the principles that we have long been advocating for them to advance. Their outline is balanced and just. While we acknowledge that the 'devil is in the details,' we are optimistic that these reasonable principles will serve as a fair and broad outline that should hopefully lead to solutions that will once and for all solve the very intractable problems inherent in our broken and antiquated immigration system."

Richard Land, president, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention: "Congress does not often exceed my expectations. But these principles, and this demonstration of bipartisanship by our leaders, certainly have. The senators have introduced principles for a bill that has a true chance of passing. I think they sense this is a real opportunity. Not only should we be encouraged but we should understand that this is truly what St. Paul would call a 'kairos,' or propitious, moment to be seized. The momentum needs to be used to pass significant and helpful immigration reform."

Carl Ruby, vice president for Student Life, Cedarville University: "What excites me about this moment is the momentum that I see among evangelical university students. All across the country, young evangelicals are rallying around this

issue. They see it as an act of living out their faith and honoring Christ's call to minister to the marginalized. They view it through the lens of civil rights and they don't want to be on the wrong side of history, as many white evangelicals were during the civil right movement. This is their moment to get an issue right, and that energizes their support for comprehensive immigration reform."

The Rev. Gabriel Salguero, president, National Latino Evangelical Coalition: "The National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC) and its 3,000 congregations are hopeful that the principles for immigration reform laid out in a bipartisan manner provides real hope to the 11 million women, children and men who remain undocumented. This legislation is an honest compromise that can move the nation forward in healthy ways."