

Samuel Rodriguez: Immigration Meeting With Obama Invigorated Me

Samuel Rodriguez and key leaders of the faith community gathered at the White House to meet with President Obama on Friday to discuss the need for commonsense immigration reform and the building momentum for it in Congress.

“Our meeting with the President invigorated me with hope and optimism. The President’s resolve in conjunction with evangelical support facilitate the prescription for a comprehensive resolution addressing America’s immigration crisis,” says Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC).

“I am convinced that with prayer and prophetic activism we will live out Matthew 25 and welcome the stranger in the name of Jesus. The collective commitment to incorporate a pathway to citizenship as an integral part of any legislative solution secures a complete integration process. Both the President and faith leaders understand that citizenship must be earned yet denying it will create a two tier society attempting to live one dream; the American dream.”

In January, eight influential bipartisan Senators—four Democrats and four Republicans—released principles that would seek to overhaul the legal immigration system as well as create a pathway to citizenship for the nation’s roughly 11 million undocumented immigrants. The Evangelical Immigration Table, comprised of key faith leaders, including Rodriguez, continue to support broad, bipartisan action as leaders in the Senate develop legislation that will modernize and strengthen our out-of-date immigration process. These same faith leaders have also encouraged other leaders and pastors, through a 40-

day immigration **prayer** challenge, to reflect on the Bible's words regarding how we should treat our immigrant neighbors.

The "I Was a Stranger" prayer challenge encourages evangelicals to read a passage of Scripture daily that relates to immigrants and pray for immigrants in their communities—and encourages their members of Congress to do the same. In addition, pastors are planning media campaigns in key states, such as South Carolina, to emphasize the urgent need for reform in 2013, including an eventual road to citizenship.

"I feel that the President is demonstrating pragmatism and thoughtful restraint in his leadership on immigration reform. He is very wise to seek the counsel of these important faith leaders," says Robert Gittelsohn, co-founder of Conservatives for Comprehensive Immigration Reform and NHCLC senior advisor on immigration.

"The leaders that attended this meeting have their fingers on the pulse of many important constituencies around the nation, and have both the moral compass and compassionate determination to find lasting and biblical solutions to our nation's broken immigration system. The faith leaders that met with President Obama are intent on finding answers that are fair to all Americans, respect the rule of law, but demonstrate a commitment to treat the least among us with decency and dignity. These people of faith will help to guide the upcoming debate on immigration to conform to a moral framework that adheres to our American values, and to our Judeo-Christian principles."

Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, vice president of Liberty University, dean and professor of Law at Liberty University School of Law, says he is pleased to see that immigration reform is moving forward.

"We need bipartisan cooperation to meet the challenge to forge comprehensive immigration reform," he says. "As Christians we

understand the biblical command to treat the alien in our midst with dignity because we were once aliens spiritually and physically. We need a just immigration policy. The urgency to reform our broken immigration system should capture the attention and hearts of every American.”

Participants in the meeting included: Leith Anderson, National Association of Evangelicals, Stephan Bauman, President and CEO, World Relief, Bishop Minerva Carcaño, United Methodist Church, Rev. Luis Cortés, President, Esperanza, Barrett Duke, Southern Baptist Convention, Bishop Orlando Findlayter, Senior Pastor, New Hope Christian Fellowship, Archbishop José Horacio Gomez, Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Mark Hetfield, President and CEO, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Rev. Kathryn Lohre, National Council of Churches, Imam Mohamed Magid, President, Islamic Society of North America, Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, Rev. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition, Dieter Uchtdorf, Second Counselor, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Jim Wallis, President and CEO, Sojourners.