

POSITION ON H.R. 1645, THE SECURITY THROUGH REGULARIZED IMMIGRATION AND A VIBRANT ECONOMY ACT OF 2007

Position. MRS/USCCB generally supports H.R. 1645 but would seek improvements in the legislation, especially to Title II of the bill dealing with interior enforcement. We would proactively add to that section the restoration of judicial review in deportation cases so that family ties and other equities could be considered by an immigration hearing before a person's deportation. We would ameliorate provisions regarding expedited removal and would eliminate language having to do with assisting undocumented persons altogether, even though there is an exception for religious organizations. We have concerns with the "legal re-entry" element of the legalization program and would want assurances that it would be implemented in a way that would not prevent otherwise qualified participants from re-entering the United States. Finally, we would add provisions to ensure effective implementation of the program, such as confidentiality in the application process, appropriate funding for implementation, and additional funding for English and civics instruction.

Talking Points. The following are talking points which could be used in legislative meetings regarding the MRS/USCCB position on H.R. 1645:

- We are generally supportive of H.R. 1645, the Strive Act. It represents a good starting point for the immigration debate and contains many of the elements necessary to effectively address our immigration crisis.
- We are pleased that it contains a path to citizenship for the 12 million undocumented in the country. We are concerned that it would require the undocumented to leave the country in order to gain permanent residency. It must be implemented in a way that ensures that those who leave the United States under this pretense are not unjustly prevented from re-entering, and that waivers are provided to those who can show undue hardship for them to leave their families.
- We support the inclusion of AgJOBS legislation and the DREAM Act in the STRIVE Act. We are also supportive of the new worker program, which includes the appropriate mechanisms, including a path to permanent residency and worker protections, necessary to ensure against worker abuse. We also strongly support Title V, which eliminates backlogs in family reunification cases.
- We have concerns with some of the enforcement aspects of the legislation. We oppose the expansion of expedited removal as well as the expansion of the definition of aggravated felony to increase the minor offenses eligible for deportation. We have concerns with

passport fraud provisions in the bill which would criminalize the offense, even for refugees and asylum seekers who must use false passports and travel documents to escape persecution. We have concerns with the mandated increase in detention beds and Border Patrol agents, since we believe that the enactment of immigration reform will obviate the need for these increases. We would like to see restoration of due process protections in the law, including the restoration of judicial discretion in deportation cases so that family ties and community equities can be considered.

- Overall, we believe H.R. 1645 is a good start to the immigration debate and urge the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives to begin the legislative process and enact a just immigration reform bill in 2007.