



Pastors' Declaration on Border Security and Immigration Reform

The updated list of pastors signed on is posted at www.immigrationdeclaration.org

Preamble

In the course of our history as a nation, challenges and crisis moments have arisen that required principled leadership and the laying aside of partisan politics. Such is the need before us in our day regarding the escalating illegal immigration crisis and the security of our national borders.

It is clear and evident that the tangible and present crisis regarding the state of our national border security and immigration system must be addressed rapidly, justly and humanely with equal regard to both rule of law and God-given value of every individual. Holy Scriptures demand that justice and compassion be balanced with neither improperly dominant over the other in our hearts and our laws.

Therefore, we as pastoral leaders called by God to proclaim His truth and acting in the tradition of our nation's history to lift our voice in the public square when there are those societal issues that demand just action by our governing representatives, do hereby present this statement of general principles and call on our elected state and national leaders to:

- End the contentious political posturing and bickering that is polarizing our nation.
- Engage in genuine dialogue and come together to arrive at real solutions to this crisis.
- Listen to the voice of the majority of people who demand secure borders, credible enforcement of our current immigration laws by our federal government, reforming the broken immigration system, and humanely addressing those who have entered the country illegally.
- Recognize and acknowledge that this crisis would already be resolved if past administrations and Congresses had exercised courageous leadership and had been willing to work together to take the necessary steps for resolution.
- Pledge to resolve this crisis by taking courageous, decisive and immediate steps to deal with and implement the following call to action.

We call on every member of the Texas State Legislature and the United States Congress to publicly support and provide proactive leadership to see this present crisis resolved in a humane way that includes but is not limited to the following steps IN THIS ORDER of priority:

Step One – Secure our National Borders First

- It is the first business of our government to protect the safety and welfare of citizens against “enemies foreign and domestic.” The well established fact that drug cartels, gang members, other criminal elements and now Middle Eastern operatives linked to Islamic terrorism are freely moving across our southern border has created an urgent national security crisis.

ACTION NEEDED:

- All borders, with specific priority to the southern border of the United States, must be secured as soon as possible using whatever means necessary to stop all entry from points other than regulated crossing stations.
- Fences, adequately armed U.S. military presence, electronic surveillance, increased Border Patrol forces, full enforcement of all existing immigration laws and policy changes protecting citizens as

well as law enforcement from persecution, prosecution or lawsuits when acting to protect life and property are examples of first steps that need to be implemented.

Step Two – Reform the Immigration System

- The process of entering the country legally is fraught with red tape, fraud, delays, unacceptable costs, unrealistically low quotas and inhumane treatment for many if not most people who desire to emigrate to the U.S. temporarily for education or work, or permanently as citizens. This system needs to be reformed so people legitimately seeking temporary or permanent residency in this country are treated with dignity and respect.

ACTION NEEDED:

- Government agencies charged with assessing and processing immigration requests are severely understaffed and inadequately funded to handle the backlog of immigration applications. Current staffing at American embassies charged with assessing and processing immigration applications should be better trained, better screened and/or replaced as necessary with uniform standards provided for greater accountability.
- Congress needs to reform immigration laws to address significant backlogs under quotas for highly skilled immigrants; to establish meaningful quotas for semi and low-skilled workers as well as enact a temporary worker program so that where there are proven shortages of U. S. workers, there is a mechanism by which workers can enter legally while maintaining their family ties to their home countries. Congress also needs to modernize the verification process by which employers determine who is authorized to work in the U. S.

Step Three – Implement a just process to legal status for specified illegal immigrants

- While illegal immigrants have violated immigration laws to enter the country or overstayed their lawfully permitted time, there needs to be a process of providing those who qualify, are involved in lawful commerce and wish to remain here a means of doing so either as guest workers or eventually as citizens, with the proviso that they be required to display proficiency in the English language and critical facts about our American history, the basis of our constitutional republic and the duties of citizenship within a reasonable period of time to qualify for either status.

ACTION NEEDED:

- Execute a fixed period of open registration for those here illegally, and provide a temporary work visa which contains requirement of adequate civil penalties yet does not require them to return to their country of origin and provides protection of legal status. Once that registration period has passed, any violation of immigration laws should result in immediate deportation.
- Any person found to have committed crimes against property or person while here, or with a felony criminal record in his or her home country, should be denied legal status of any kind and deported.
- Effectively enforce laws which prohibit non-citizens from receiving entitlement to non-emergency government services unless specifically adopted by legislative process at the state or federal level.

We the undersigned pastors declare our commitment to using our voice and influence in every way possible to support these principles. We will also publicly hold accountable those who choose to remain silent, who are divisive for purely political purposes, or who act in opposition to these principles.