



WASHINGTON IMMIGRATION
REFORM COALITION (WIRC)

FOR

America

UNITY STATEMENT

We are faced with a moral crisis in our country because of the irresponsible inaction of our federal government to reform our broken immigration system. Our current system has not been updated for decades and it simply does not make sense for families or businesses. We are penalizing hardworking immigrants who are needed for our economy to function, and tearing apart families who just want to be together—simply because we do not have the courage to fix the underlying system, bring those who are here out of the shadows, and allow future immigrants the opportunity to come in legally.

In light of this moral crisis, we are compelled to escalate our call for Comprehensive Immigration Reform that includes legalization and a path to citizenship for the 12 million undocumented immigrants who are here; family reunification and a clearing of the backlogs of applications for those who have applied legally for their family members and yet wait so long to be reunited; full worker protections; and due process and fairness in the immigration system. We need to stop the senseless deportations of thousands of people, and end the fear that pervades our communities.

We have marched, rallied, met with our Congressional members, collected petition signatures, and made thousands of phone calls and faxes. Yet we have seen Congress do nothing. We are no closer to comprehensive immigration reform than we were before. Both President Obama and Republicans have put forward enforcement-only or “secure the border first” strategies that are ineffective at keeping us safer, wasteful and deadly. We are disappointed that this Administration has increased deportations even beyond the last Bush Administration, deporting 1,000 immigrants every day and continuing to expand programs such as 287g, Secure Communities and Criminal Alien Program.

Meanwhile, Republicans in Congress have shamefully run from the need to reform the immigration system, catering only to shrill voices of a minority instead of doing what is right for the country by showing courage and coming up with real solutions to our broken immigration system. We challenge Republican Senators including the Republican leadership and Senators John McCain and Lindsay Graham to answer the call of those in their own party who demand leadership

We must choose if we stand on the side of immigration reform and justice for all, or on the side of racial profiling and exclusion.

We stand united as faith leaders, union members, veterans, teachers, lawyers, and community members in solidarity with the millions who contribute to our communities and economy while being denied full access to them.

in putting forward, this year, a real bill that can reform the broken immigration system.

In the wake of the passage of Arizona’s SB1070 and its impending implementation, copycat legislation has surfaced in 22 other states (at last count). The consequences of federal inaction have never been more real. In the absence of immigration reform, states and other locales will jump in to fill the void with misguided, harmful and even unconstitutional solutions of their own. Programs that put the enforcement of immigration law in the hands of local police undermine safety for all of our community and run counter to the Constitutional mandate for immigration enforcement to be handled by the Federal government.

More than anything, they call into question the very nature of

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UNITY STATEMENT CONTINUED ...

America: what do we stand for? We must choose if we stand on the side of immigration reform and justice for all, or on the side of racial profiling and exclusion.

We stand united as faith leaders, union members, veterans, teachers, lawyers, and community members in solidarity with the millions who contribute to our communities and economy while being denied full access to them. We refuse to stand by as children leave for school not knowing if their parents will still be there when they come home. We refuse to watch members of our communities and congregations detained on their way to work or while waiting for a bus. We refuse to accept that even families who apply legally for their parents, children or spouses to come to the country have to wait sometimes decades to be reunited.

We feel we have no choice but to draw attention to this moral crisis by blocking 2nd Avenue with a wall. The wall represents the two choices available to us today.

On one side is our current misguided focus on enforcement strategies without any real reform. The wall symbolizes separated families from all countries—both those who try to come here legally as well as those who have no actual way to come here legally even though the economy demands their labor. The wall symbolizes the broken communities and businesses being created by our current harsh enforcement practices. We will be building an altar here that honors the many contributions of immigrants to this country.

On the other side is what America would be “beyond the wall.” Here

are the hopes and dreams that represent millions across the country, dreams of a country that honors its origins as a nation of immigrants; of the constant struggle to become a more perfect union and to ensure that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice. Beyond the wall, we believe we can have a country with a sane and just immigration system, a system that allows families to be together, that allows workers to contribute their labor in the full light and with full protections, and ensures due process for all. Beyond the wall, any enforcement would be humane and effective, in part because the underlying system has now been fixed.

We are reminded today as we undertake this action of the great history of nonviolent direct action. As Dr. Martin Luther King wrote in his letter from the Birmingham jail, there is rarely direct action that is “well timed” in the view of those who have not suffered and freedom is rarely given, it must always be demanded.

Our act of peaceful civil disobedience is performed with the belief that America’s laws can and should be better. When our leaders cannot see the road ahead we must lead them to it with our actions and our hope. Today, we want our actions to join with those across the country and elevate the call to President Obama, Republicans and Democrats on the Judiciary Committee and the full Congress to work immediately—with full heart and full effort—to pass just and humane immigration reform this year.

---Unity Statement Signed by Those Conducting Civil Disobedience