

As Supreme Court Considers Arizona Law, Faith Leaders Call upon President, Congress to Reassert Authority on Immigration Law

Voice concern over “unprecedented transfer” of authority to state, local governments urge movement toward comprehensive immigration reform

(Taken from the May 2012 issue of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men J/P Alert)

WASHINGTON--In letters sent April 24, on the eve of oral arguments to the Supreme Court on Arizona’s immigration law, 15 religious leaders urged President Barack Obama and the 112th Congress to “reassert your authority” and move to enact immigration reform legislation “as soon as possible.”

The national faith leaders expressed concern that, because of its inaction on this issue for several years, the federal government is implicitly transferring “unprecedented authority” to state and local governments to implement immigration policy, to the “detriment of our nation and our local communities.”

“Instead of one federal immigration system applicable to all, we now have many states and an untold number of localities attempting to create their own immigration policies,” the letters stated. “This will only lead to a patchwork of laws which would cause family separation, economic disruption, and divided communities.”

The leaders called for federal elected officials to move to enact immigration reform legislation, which would reaffirm federal authority over immigration law and preserve family unity as the cornerstone of the U.S. immigration system. They agreed that any reform of the system should feature a path to citizenship for the undocumented.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, president of USCCB, and Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration, signed the letters on behalf of the U.S. bishops. Other signatories included Bishop Minerva Circano, resident bishop of the Phoenix area of the United Methodist Church and chair of the United Methodist Task Force on Immigration; Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals; Mark Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, presiding bishop and primate of the Episcopal Church; Rabbi Steve Gutow, president of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs; and Reverend Sam Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

The letters can be found at: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/upload/April-2012-USCCB-Interfaith-Letter-to-Congress-Immigration.pdf and www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/upload/April-2012-USCCB-Interfaith-Letter-to-President-Obama-Immigration.pdf.

Testimony of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops before the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration on the constitutionality of state laws is available at:

www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/congressional-testimony/upload/Testimony-JYoung-042412-Senate-Judiciary-Hearing.pdf.

The USCCB amicus brief on the case of *Arizona v. United States* is also available online: www.usccb.org/about/general-counsel/amicus-briefs/upload/state-of-arizona-v-united-states-of-america.pdf.