



American Friends Service Committee

The American Friends Service Committee statement for the Congressional Record pertaining to the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing Friday, April 19, 2013

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is an almost 100-year old faith-based organization grounded in the Quaker belief in the dignity and worth of every person. AFSC provides direct legal services and engages in organizing with immigrants and allies along with advocacy and movement building throughout the U.S. We directly support immigrant workers and refugees and their communities to organize themselves, to seek out and raise their issues as a way to affirm their aspirations and needs, and to continue to make contributions to this nation.

The AFSC finds the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 a positive first step but a far cry from the just and humane reforms for which immigrant communities, faith, labor and advocacy groups have been calling. Instead it reproduces, and even expands, many of the current failed policies that are cruel, costly and inefficient.

We are particularly concerned about provisions relating to border security triggers, which must be met before any undocumented person can apply for legal permanent residency. Tying the ability of individuals to adjust their immigration status to certification of the Comprehensive Southern Border Security Strategy invites endless delays for those seeking permanent residency. Additionally, the bill fails to combat the impunity enjoyed by Border Patrol and federal agents who abuse the human and civil rights of border residents. Since 2010 the Border Patrol has claimed the lives of 20 unarmed civilians. The use of force is all too commonplace and must be addressed in this legislation.

We applaud the creation of a path to citizenship for immigrants living in our communities. Yet the process through which this status is achieved contains many onerous conditionalities that will continue to keep immigrants in the shadows and expose them to the cruelties of a broken immigration system, rendering them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

The AFSC implores Congress to adopt compassionate and effective immigration reforms that are grounded in the following principles:

- Develop humane economic policies to reduce forced migration
- Protect the labor rights of ALL workers
- Develop a clear path to permanent legal residency and a clear path to citizenship
- Respect the civil and human rights of immigrants
- Demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border
- Make family reunification a top priority
- Ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to services

The AFSC urges the Committee to exert visionary leadership and to support new immigration policies that respect the human rights and equal economic opportunity of all in our communities and thanks the Committee for this opportunity to submit a statement.