



American Friends Service Committee

American Friends Service Committee statement for the Congressional Record pertaining to the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee – Subcommittee on Homeland Security Hearing Thursday, March 14, 2013

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

Our immigration policy recommendations are grounded in AFSC's history and values as a faith-based organization and in the voices of the communities with whom we are deeply connected. The basis of U.S. immigration policy should be the protection of human rights and equal opportunity. Efforts designed to ensure compliance with immigration laws must also be rooted in these principles of fairness, equality, and protecting the human dignity of all. AFSC calls for an end to the detention and deportation system that has torn apart families, and instead encourages that the human rights of liberty and due process are enforced.

The increasingly militarized U.S. borders continue to undermine the well-being of border communities. Communities with whom we work along the U.S.-Mexico border report a distressing range of ongoing civil and human rights abuses which include racial profiling and harassment by federal law enforcement officials. Since the establishment of border control policies in 1993, at least 7,000 migrants have lost their lives. From 2009-2012, 19 Border Patrol-related killings of border residents and migrants have been reported. Lack of accountability and inadequate oversight of the Border Patrol invites further human rights abuses.

AFSC offers the following policy recommendations:

- Demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border and cease all enforcement policies and practices that criminalize and punish immigrants. (i.e., Programs such as Operation Streamline threaten basic due process protections and Operation Stonegarden operates with little oversight, greatly increasing misuse of funds and undermines law enforcement relationships with members of border communities);
- Prevent the extension of militarized border operations to the U.S.-Canada border and the interior of the U.S. (Increased Border Patrol enforcement operations have raised serious concerns about how Border Patrol operates, especially when engaged in civil law enforcement practices, such as responding to 9-1-1 calls and setting up unwarranted checkpoints);
- Reduce the excessive numbers of Border Patrol agents while increasing investment in oversight mechanisms for the Office of the Inspector General and other independent investigative bodies;
- Require border enforcement agencies and their agents to comply with local, national, and international laws and civil and human rights along the border region and in the interior of the country.

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. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.