



American Friends Service Committee

American Friends Service Committee statement for the Congressional Record pertaining to the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing Wednesday, February 13, 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 and engages in organizing with immigrants and allies along with advocacy and movement building throughout the U.S. We directly support immigrants and refugee workers 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.

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. We believe that the basis of U.S. immigration policy should be the protection of human rights and equal opportunity, not structures that privilege people of certain nationalities, enable employers to tap workers outside the protections of wage and safety laws, or result in the forced separation of families and communities. Humane immigration policy must include a fair mechanism for undocumented workers to gain permanent residency and citizenship in a fair, timely and orderly fashion. At the same time, it must stop the detention and deportation system that has torn apart families, and instead ensure that the human rights of liberty and due process are enforced.

Specifically we urge compassionate and effective immigration policies 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 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

AFSC applauds the "Dear Colleague" letter released by Senators Leahy, Coons, Blumenthal and Hirono calling on Congress to support immigration policy reforms that respect the human and civil rights of immigrants. We agree that the current immigration system is punitive, fails to provide adequate due process protections, results in unnecessary detention in often inhumane conditions and tears families apart. We encourage the Committee to embrace this values-driven approach to reforms.

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.