



Committee on Migration

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STATEMENT OF BISHOP JOHN C. WESTER

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CHAIRMAN, U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS' COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION

JANUARY 6, 2010

Thank you. This week we celebrate in the Catholic Church National Migration Week, to recognize the importance of newcomers—immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers---to our communities.

As many of you know, the U.S. bishops and many in the Catholic community have been in support of comprehensive immigration reform for some time now. We believe it is the most practical, humane, and effective solution to the problem of illegal immigration to the United States. Specifically, we have emphasized the need for 1) a pathway to citizenship for the 11-12 million undocumented in the country; 2) reforms to our family immigration system; 3) the creation of legal avenues for migrants to come here legally and safely to work; 4) the restoration of due process protections for immigrants; and 5) steps to address the root causes of migration, or the push factors.

We are heartened that Representative Luis Gutierrez of Chicago and about 70 of his colleagues in the House of Representatives have introduced new legislation which addresses many of these concerns. We anticipate the introduction of similar legislation in the U.S. Senate, with possible consideration by the Senate early in 2010.

In order to generate support for immigration reform, we have taken several steps in anticipation of a debate this year. First, we have launched a postcard campaign under the auspices of the

Justice for Immigrants campaign, targeted to dioceses, religious orders, and any one who wants to join, so that parishioners can communicate with their legislators. To date, there have been 1.5 million postcards ordered by dioceses and parishes.

We also have updated our Justice for Immigrants website, which includes a link so that parishioners can send the postcards electronically to their legislators and an updated parish packet. Also available is the National Migration Week website, which contains other materials.

We will use these tools to help influence our legislators in the coming months. We remain committed to moving immigration reform as soon as possible.

It is our view, and that of others, that the American public, including the Catholic and other faith communities, want a humane and comprehensive solution to the problems with our immigration system, and they want Congress to address this issue. We will work to make sure that they do.

Thank you.