

FINAL VERSION - Concurred

Resolution: **B006**
Title: **Immigration: Economic Justice Implications**
Topic: **Immigration**
Committee: **09 - National and International Concerns**
House of Initial Action: **Deputies**
Proposer: **The Rt. Rev. Sanford Z.K. Hampton**

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 76th General Convention recognize that all people living in the United States are entitled to protection provided by due process of law and that all immigrants and their families are entitled to receive protection granted by our laws and Constitution; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention call for a moratorium on roadside checkpoints and raids carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at work sites, transportation systems, community gatherings, places of worship, lawful assemblies and private residences leaving families torn apart and children parentless and negatively affecting businesses, workers, and communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention advocate for a return of congressional consideration and implementation of comprehensive immigration reform which will allow millions of undocumented immigrants who have established roots in the United States and are often parents and spouses of U.S. Citizens to have a pathway to legalization and to full social and economic integration in to the United States; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention deplore conditions found in immigration detention centers and the over-reliance on a costly prison-like detention system for immigrants, and urge the uses of alternatives to detention, and calls for accountability and oversight to ensure detainees are provided with humanitarian treatment, adequate food and medical care and sanitary conditions; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention call for termination of any program which allows or funds local enforcement agencies to enforce immigration law, and return that enforcement to Federal Immigration Agents, leaving local law enforcement agencies the work of keeping communities safe and dedicating their resources to that end, and provide for a sense of safety for immigrant victims of crimes to come forward and report without fear of detention and deportation, and be it further

Resolved, That in as much as youth are a priority of the Episcopal Church, the 76th General Convention support the provision of conditional legal status for undocumented youth who arrived as infants and/or children and have grown up as members of our communities and schools, providing for them the opportunity to pursue higher education and/or serve the United

States so they can become full contributing members of our communities and could eventually become U.S. Citizens.

EXPLANATION

Twenty years ago a general amnesty for immigrant workers was granted by the federal government. Immigrants who could demonstrate "good character" and financial stability and were able to pay a penalty could apply for legal permanent residency and eventual citizenship.

For many years family members who were U.S. citizens or legal residents could petition for residency for certain immediate relatives. A fine could be paid and family members did not need to leave the United States to obtain a visa. That avenue is now closed. Undocumented family members need to leave the country to obtain a visa and then can face a ten year ban on re-entry - a waiver is not assured. Depending on the family category, petitions for visas can take up to 20 years to be granted. Even immediate visas for spouses and minor children are now backlogged.

Immigrants are filling the jobs that go unwanted and unfilled by U.S. citizens. Employers report that they advertise for weeks and offer jobs to U.S. citizens prior to turning to undocumented workers. Workers who are U.S. citizens often quit after only a few days of work. However, employers who are trying to "do it the right way" are not able to bring people into the country on employment visas because the system is so backlogged. Meanwhile, crops are not being planted or harvested. Tourist and recreational attractions have had to close down due to the labor shortage.

Immigration enforcement is creating havoc with families who are otherwise stable members of our communities. Parents are afraid to send children to school; children are afraid of going home and finding their parents gone. Victims of crime are hesitant to report crimes for fear of revealing their undocumented status.

Crossing the border without documents is a civil offense, a misdemeanor. It is not a crime of any type to be simply living in the U. S. undocumented (it only becomes a felony if someone comes back after having been deported). Nevertheless, immigrants who are caught in raids often spend months and even years in jail-like settings while their cases are being appealed. As a result of the raids, detentions and deportations, a large number of families will live their lives not knowing what happened to their loved ones - this is happening to many, many families. It is time to address this problem directly.

Treaties like NAFTA (The North American Free Trade Act) harm foreign workers by allowing the import and sale of cheap basic goods in their countries. U.S. agriculture, particularly large agribusiness corporations subsidized by our government, can sell basic foods like rice and beans in countries like Mexico more cheaply than the native industry. When small farmers cannot sell their products, they leave their farms for their cities where jobs are not available. In order to provide for their families, workers are obliged to seek employment as a last resort in other countries like the United States. Most people, given a choice, would prefer to remain in their own countries.

Scripture is full of immigrant stories - in the Book of Genesis Abraham and Sarah make their journey to the land that God promised to them and their descendants. Leviticus reminds us that we are to welcome strangers as citizens in our lands. There are two major stories concerning immigration into Egypt: in the first Jacob's family were economic refugees due to a famine in the land; In the second Mary and Joseph as political refugees sought sanctuary with the child in Egypt.