



Pastors' Declaration on Border Security and Immigration Reform *(Created and signed in 2010, updated January 2025; posted at www.uspastorouncil.org)*

Preamble

A PASTORAL APPEAL FOR A REASONED APPROACH TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Understanding that we have a crisis in our nation because of the mushrooming number of people crossing our borders illegally, we commend President Trump for being willing to address this crisis with actions that we trust will resolve this in a way that balances justice, mercy, and common sense. Without question the issue of illegal immigration must be addressed. Because of the inaction of Congress and previous Presidents, this issue, fixed easily a number of years ago, is now a major crisis and contains a significant security threat to the nation. It also has complexities in that many of those here illegally have been here for many years. They are part of the fabric of the United States and pose no security threat.

They are now a productive part of the economy. Their children have grown up here and in many cases have no knowledge of any other nation. The question is how is that to be achieved in a way that seals our borders and deports those who have criminal records, relation to gangs or gang activity, any suspected potential terror links, also those who entered the country illegally after January 1, 2020 and at the same time in a common sense way shows mercy toward those who do not fit that criteria?

With the approach contained in this pastoral appeal, this issue would be resolved within one generation in a comprehensive way. Our intent is to speak with a reasoned and, we believe, biblically grounded voice to much fear and confusion surrounding the Trump administration's delivery on his promise to rapidly begin enforcing immigration laws with an emphasis on removing violent criminals. Fifteen years ago this team of pastors rose to the occasion on this very issue due to escalation of fear, anger and rhetoric around illegal immigration by crafting and presenting a declaration calling on our elected officials to abide by its historic principles.

The Pastors' Declaration on Border Security and Immigration Reform was created in 2010 and recently updated, to offer what we believe to be a solid balance between justice (the rule of law) and compassion (treating all people with dignity and respect). We recognize that even like-minded people of the Christian faith can disagree on strategy even where we agree on principle, and our objective was to avoid attempting to "write legislation" but rather to assert clear principles.

Hundreds of Pastors throughout Texas and in over twenty states, representing essentially every ethnic and denominational background, signed on in the 2010 launch of this declaration. As we resubmit this in February of 2025 we pray and expect that those serving us in state legislative bodies, the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate and the White House will hear, listen to and respond to the voices of pastors representing hundreds of thousands of god-fearing, patriotic citizens of faith from coast to coast who firmly call for action according to these principles - now.

We call on every member of the Texas State Legislature and the United States Congress to publicly support and provide proactive leadership to see this present crisis resolved in a humane way that includes, but is not limited to, the following steps that can and should be performed simultaneously:

Step One – Secure our National Borders First

- It is the first business of our government to protect the safety and welfare of citizens against “enemies foreign and domestic.” The well-established fact that drug cartels, gang members, other violent criminal elements and now Middle Eastern operatives linked to Islamic terrorism are freely moving across our southern border has created an urgent national security crisis.

ACTION NEEDED:

- Effectively and justly empower and support the location, incarceration and/or removal of those here illegally with criminal records or have committed violent crimes while here, for the basic public safety of American citizens and civil order.
- All borders, with specific priority to the southern border of the United States, must be secured as soon as possible using whatever means necessary to stop all entry from points other than regulated crossing stations.
- Border walls, adequately armed U.S. military presence, electronic surveillance, expanded and fully supported Border Patrol forces, full enforcement of all existing immigration laws and policy changes protecting citizens as well as law enforcement from persecution, prosecution or lawsuits when acting to protect life and property are examples of first steps that need to be implemented.

Step Two – Reform the Immigration System

- The process of entering the country legally is fraught with red tape, fraud, delays, unacceptable costs, unrealistically low quotas and inhumane treatment for many if not most people who desire to emigrate to the U.S. temporarily for education or work, or permanently as citizens. This system needs to be reformed so people legitimately seeking temporary or permanent residency in this country are treated with dignity and respect.

ACTION NEEDED:

- Government agencies charged with assessing and processing immigration requests are severely understaffed and inadequately funded to handle the backlog of immigration applications. Current staffing at American embassies charged with assessing and processing immigration applications should be better trained, better screened and/or replaced as necessary with uniform standards provided for greater accountability.
- Congress needs to reform immigration laws to address significant backlogs under quotas for highly skilled immigrants; to establish meaningful quotas for semi and low-skilled workers as well as enact a temporary worker program so that where there are proven shortages of U. S. workers, there is a mechanism by which workers can enter legally while maintaining their family ties to their home countries.

Congress also needs to modernize the verification process by which employers determine who is authorized to work in the U. S.

Step Three – Implement a just process to legal status for specified illegal immigrants

- While illegal immigrants have violated immigration laws to enter the country or overstayed their lawfully permitted time, there needs to be a process of providing those who qualify, are involved in lawful commerce and wish to remain here a means of doing so either as guest workers or eventually as citizens, with the proviso that they be required to display proficiency in the English language and critical facts about our American history, the basis of our constitutional republic and the duties of citizenship within a reasonable period of time to qualify for either status.

ACTION NEEDED:

- For those with no criminal record and who have proof they entered the country before January 1, 2020 illegally or remained illegally, execute a fixed period of open registration and, for those qualified, provide a temporary work visa which contains requirement of adequate civil penalties yet does not universally require them to return to their country of origin and and which provides protection of legal status. Once that registration period has passed, any violation of immigration laws should result in immediate deportation.
- Any person found to have committed crimes against property or person while here, or with a felony criminal record in his or her home country, should be denied legal status of any kind and immediately deported.
- Effectively enforce laws which prohibit non-citizens from receiving entitlement to non-emergency government services unless specifically adopted by legislative process at the state or federal level.

We the undersigned pastors declare our commitment to using our voice and influence in every way possible to support these principles. We will also publicly hold accountable those who choose to remain silent, who are divisive for purely political purposes, or who act in opposition to these principles.