

Christian leaders push president to reform immigration law

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—Christian leaders, including three members of President Obama’s faith advisory council, pushed the president to make good on his promise of comprehensive immigration reform.

Samuel Rodriguez, Noel Castellanos, Vashti McKenzie and Jim Wallis of the group [Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform](#) said immigration reform must have the same high-level priority as the government’s focus on banks, auto companies and healthcare.

“Whether we came to this country by choice, by chance, by capture, we have to proceed. This is the urgency of the now,” said McKenzie, a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Wallis, Castellanos and McKenzie all hold seats on the White House’s faith advisory council. Rodriguez is president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform released a statement asking the president to back legislation that would reduce waiting times for immigrants separated from their families; to provide a process for foreign-born workers and their families already in the U.S. to earn citizenship; to expand legal avenues for workers and families to enter the U.S.; and to examine solutions to the root causes of migration.

Wallis, founder of the progressive evangelical group Sojourners, said immigration enforcement must comply with humanitarian values.

“Those principles will guide the process,” he said.

Wallis added he supports safe sanctuary of immigrants who use houses of worship as asylum from deportation, saying “the church has a history of not waiting for legislation.”

Castellanos, CEO of the Christian Community Development Association agreed: “Christians are going to do whatever it takes to help their neighbor. I think it pushes us to look at what our national laws are.”