

Editorial: A possibility for immigration reform

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Gridlock has become the metaphor for 21st century America. Partisan political hardball seems to be gumming up the works of progress in every important common endeavor. It ranges from election campaigns; to local, state and federal budgets; to banking crises; to healthcare availability and costs; to the nation's crumbling infrastructure; to foreign relations. You can add a string of additional items to the list.

Stephen Bauman (left), president of World Relief, announces the release of the Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform.

Fortunately, Americans of faith and goodwill have taken significant action toward unsnarling an ideological intersection that has been gridlocked for years—immigration reform.

A bipartisan ecumenical group calling itself the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#) has drafted the Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform. Already signed by about 150 leaders, the document outlines six broad steps designed to help our nation repair its immigration crisis.

Here is the text of the statement:

Our national immigration laws have created a moral, economic and political crisis in America. Initiatives to remedy this crisis have led to polarization and name calling in which opponents have misrepresented each other's positions as open borders and amnesty versus deportations of millions. This false choice has led to an unacceptable political

stalemate at the federal level at a tragic human cost.

As evangelical Christian leaders, we call for a bipartisan solution on immigration that:

- Respects the God-given dignity of every person.*
- Protects the unity of the immediate family.*
- Respects the rule of law.*
- Guarantees secure national borders.*
- Ensures fairness to taxpayers.*
- Establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents.*

We urge our nation's leaders to work together with the American people to pass immigration reform that embodies these key principles and that will make our nation proud.

Editor Marv Knox



Skeptics who doubt the possibility of reforming our immigration crisis are compelled to reconsider when they examine the range of religious leaders who have affirmed the immigration principles. The Evangelical Immigration Table, which drafted the document, includes ultraconservatives, such as the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's Richard Land; conservatives, such as Leith Anderson of the National Association of Evangelicals; principled nonpartisans, such as David Beckmann of Bread for the World; and progressives, such as Sojourners' Jim Wallis.

Two Baptist General Convention of Texas leaders signed the

document—Jesse Rincones, president of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, and Suzii Paynter, executive director of the Christian Life Commission. So did SBC President Bryant Wright, Land and at least a dozen other SBC leaders. As did leaders of Evangelicals for Social Action, Focus on the Family, InterVarsity, LifeWay Research, Prison Fellowship and World Vision.

The breadth of support for the Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform should fill every compassionate Christian with hope. Of course, convincing politicians to coalesce around these principles will be more difficult. But if such a broad swath of politically diverse Christendom can come together, then perhaps the cultural tide is turning. Reform is possible.

Political observers speculate immigration votes will not occur before the November elections. But now is the time to convince politicians immigration reform is the right thing to do, is achievable and, pointedly, is in their interest.

The Christian faith stands on a long and noble tradition of looking out for the stranger and alien (Old Testament) and caring for the "least of these" (Jesus). By promoting immigration reform, we can transform lives and demonstrate the love of Jesus to a watching world.

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