

**Testimony of  
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**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**“The Border Security, Economic Opportunity,  
and Immigration Modernization Act, S.744”**

**April 22, 2013**

Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Grassley and distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee: Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process as you work towards a bipartisan solution to our nation's current immigration crisis.

As a Pastor, I got involved in this debate as a result of my everyday responsibilities. My personal encounters with hurting people compelled me to work towards improving a system that isn't working. It isn't working for a young father with children back home, for a widow and mother of two teenagers born here, for a family who has done everything to come legally but is still caught in a system that is neither just nor fair, and is certainly not compassionate.

Determined to make a difference for these and so many others, I've spoken to law enforcement officials, immigration attorneys and government officials at every level. Everyone agrees on the magnitude of the problem, from rampant crime along the border, to human trafficking across our borders, to broken homes and families on all sides of our borders.

But when it comes to proposed solutions, they have mostly come from one of two opposite poles. One side calls for what sounds like open borders and amnesty with little regard for the rule of law or our national security. The other side demands closed borders and mass deportations with little regard for human dignity, and at the expense of our national identity. With such strong and opposing forces, we've heard plenty of rhetoric but seen no workable solutions.

In the midst of this confusion, I've wondered what God has to say. I read in Romans 13..."Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." God is a God of order, our nation must be a nation of law, and our laws must be just.

I also read in Leviticus 19... "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt..." God is just, but he also expects us to treat one another with compassion, each having been created in His image.

In Matthew 25, we read about those who stood before the Lord and were invited into His Kingdom. They fed the hungry, gave something to drink to the thirsty, **welcomed the stranger**,

clothed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned. In the words of Jesus: 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

So which is it, justice or compassion? The answer is: Yes! There is balance in the tension between the two. We are to be guided in all we do to protect the value and dignity of human life, and to alleviate human suffering wherever and whenever we can. And we must have laws and a legal system that enables us to live out those values in a way that is just and fair.

I recognize not everyone shares my convictions, but I want you to know that there are many who do. I am but one local church Pastor, but I have the privilege to stand with thousands of other Pastors and leaders from across the country, who represent a growing tide of support for and demand for a bipartisan effort and a comprehensive approach to immigration reform.

In my city, the Houston Area Pastors Council wrote a Declaration on Immigration Reform and more than 1,000 Pastors representing the great diversity of Houston signed on. As a Southern Baptist, I rejoiced as our Convention with 45,000 churches and 16 million members, passed a resolution in 2011 with overwhelming support, calling for just and humane public policy with regard to immigration. And most recently a national coalition of Christian denominations and organizations known as the Evangelical Immigration Table, with thousands of Christian leaders representing millions of members, calling for bipartisan comprehensive reform 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

That is why I was pleased to see the introduction of S. 744, The Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act. While this bill may not be perfect, it appears to be an excellent starting point for bipartisan discussion that moves this debate forward toward real solutions that work in the real world and for real people.

In a passionate debate with opposing views, some of us are called to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. In the end I will stand before The Lord and give an account for my actions. It will be clear whether or not I cared about what God cares about, and whether or not I did what I was supposed to do, not because it was popular with men, but because it was right with God.

I am calling on you... our leaders, who no doubt share my sense of calling, and swore an oath under God, and I believe will also give an account before God who has given you authority. I urge you, don't waste this opportunity to do the right thing, under God and for the sake of millions of people...come together and give us a comprehensive solution that works.

Thank you again for giving me this opportunity, and please know that we support you and that we are praying for you as you work through this bill and as you resolve this immigration crisis.