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Christian Faith Leaders Speak Out Against Demagoguery, Injustices in Tancredo-Shuler Immigration Bill

“Secure America through Verification and Enforcement Act” Unfairly Targets Immigrants, Does Little to Deal with Immigration Issue

Washington, DC – The failure of Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform earlier this year has sparked a heated debate that has unfortunately allowed for widespread blame for the ills of society to be placed at the feet of undocumented immigrants. Recent expressions of hatred, bigotry and xenophobia have spewed from individuals and the media, and that sentiment has unfortunately spilled over to members of Congress. A recent measure introduced by U.S. Representatives Tom Tancredo (R-CO) and Heath Shuler (D-NC), as well as U.S. Senators Mark Pryor (D-AR) and Mary Landrieu (D-LA), called the “Secure America through Verification and Enforcement Act” (H.R. 4088/S.2368) is the latest example. The Tancredo-Schuler bill purports a “get tough” approach to illegal immigration that targets undocumented immigrants with harsh penalties and effectively drives them further into the shadows. Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform joins faith leaders across the country in condemning the Tancredo-Schuler bill and calling on members of Congress to reject it.

“After failing to pass any sort of meaningful immigration reform this year, Congress appears ready to place blame not with their leadership but with the 12 million undocumented immigrants living, working, and paying taxes in our communities,” said [Insert Name]. “Christians and people of faith should be deeply troubled by members of Congress signing onto the Tancredo-Schuler immigration bill. This knee-jerk reaction designed to score political points by playing to Americans’ fears is exactly the wrong way to deal with immigration. It brings out the worst in us, rather than the best. Members of Congress should reject this divisive bill.

“Scripture teaches us to welcome the stranger among us. As Christians, our actions should reflect those teachings, and as a nation of immigrants, our laws should reflect our American values. This country was built on the contributions of generations of immigrants, and the church has always played an important role in welcoming newcomers to the United States,” added [Insert Name]. “Unfortunately, many Christians today seem to have forgotten these lessons of Jesus, and have succumbed to unfounded stereotypes and hateful rhetoric. The challenge to Christians is to overcome these and live by our faith, not seal our borders and shut others out of the country, as the Tancredo-Shuler bill attempts to do.

“We call on members of Congress to vote against the Tancredo-Schuler bill and instead work to enact immigration reform that protects families and respects human dignity. Until they do so, families will continue to be ripped apart, immigrants will continue to die in the desert, and workers will continue to be exploited by scrupulous employers and outdated laws. Enforcement-only policies have not and will not work. The American people expect more than an immigration bill that offers only harsh rhetoric and ineffective solutions. They expect members of Congress to step up, show leadership, and pass comprehensive reform that upholds the rule of law, reunites families, and recognizes the inherent value of all human beings.”

Why the Tancredo-Shuler Immigration Bill is the Wrong Approach:

- The Secure America Through Verification and Enforcement bill H.R. 4088 was introduced by Shuler and Tancredo, two members of the House's anti-immigrant caucus. The bill singles out undocumented immigrants for harsh treatment while offering nothing to effectively reform a patchwork of broken immigration laws.
- The bill includes "enforcement-only" measures to increase border enforcement, mandate the use of the government's flawed SAVE/E-Verify worker verification database, increase the amount of immigration prison space, increase the number of interior enforcement agents, and other measures.
- The bill does nothing to protect or reunite families, a goal that has always been a staple of America's immigration policy, and an issue that Christians and people of faith have long advocated for.
- The bill plays into the fears and stereotypes that have promulgated in the media, allowing blame for the ills of society to be placed at the feet of undocumented immigrants, rather than effectively dealing with the immigration issue.