

September 20, 2007

The Honorable Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senate  
290 Russell Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Graham,

Representing a diverse array of faith-based organizations, we write to express our opposition to S.1984, the Immigration Enforcement and Border Security Act of 2007. We are extremely disappointed that, as one of the leading advocates for comprehensive, and therefore constructive, immigration reform, you would sponsor a piecemeal, enforcement-only measure. Our organizations are wholly committed to the right of the government to enforce the law and to protect the national security interests of the United States, yet this bill will do little, if anything, to achieve its stated goal of securing America's borders. Instead of addressing the many underlying problems with our nation's broken immigration system, S.1984 would simply perpetuate the disorderly system, contribute to this nation's insecurity, and undermine America's historic role as a welcoming nation of immigrants.

America must adopt solutions that will successfully protect our national interests while simultaneously ensuring that our nation continues to embrace the newcomer among us. For the faith community, ensuring that our immigration system serves the social and economic interests of our country and communities while treating immigrants with dignity is fundamental to our religious and ethical traditions.

We recognize the difficulty in achieving the delicate balance that will safeguard American values while also preventing those who wish to do us harm from entering this country. However, S.1984 would not promote increased national security and protection from terrorism. Rather than reforming our system to funnel the inevitable flow of migrants across our borders through legal channels, allowing us to better differentiate between those who mean to do us harm and those whose only purpose it to work or reunite with family, this legislation would drive the undocumented further underground by criminalizing immigrants and deputizing state and local law enforcement officers in enforcing federal immigration law, among a host of other troubling provisions. Absent reforms to fix our legal immigration system, these attempts to tighten enforcement will only maintain the status quo.

Further, many of these policies could lead to disastrous consequences for the nation's security, economy, and civil rights. It is a tragic mistake to abandon sensible and workable reform for empty enforcement legislation that does little, if anything, to make us safer. S.1984 is a sound-bite approach to immigration reform, not the solution to a national crisis the American public desires and deserves.

The harsh and ineffective enforcement-only approach represented by S.1984 will only serve to further politicize the immigration issue. We urge you to set aside this ill-conceived initiative and instead urge the Senate to press forward with bipartisan immigration reform that truly addresses all the complexities of our broken system. It is only through such a comprehensive approach, which will legalize and integrate our current undocumented underclass even as it deals with borders and enforcement issues, that we can provide for a safe and legal future flow of immigration while improving our national security.

Respectfully,

American Islamic Congress

American Jewish Committee

Anti-Defamation League

Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

The Episcopal Church

Franciscan Friars – Holy Name Province Office for Justice Peace & Integrity of Creation

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Irish Apostolate USA

Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society