



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

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## IMMIGRATION TALKING POINTS

Why do we need Comprehensive Immigration Reform?

- Due to processing backlogs and insufficient quotas, depending on one's country of origin, the wait for a visa to enter the U.S. can be up to twenty years. This means that families wait years to be reunited.
- The escalation in raids and deportation by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) results in the breakup of families. Those deported often have children and/or spouses who are U.S. citizens.
- The U.S. detains over 280,000 people a year, at the annual cost of 1.2 billion dollars to tax payers. Much of this money goes to private contractors.
- In spite of the billions spent on fences, raids, patrols, and prisons, undocumented immigrants have increased since 1992 from 4 million to about 12 million. Clearly, enforcement alone is insufficient.
- The number of working visas issued each year is only a fraction of the number of available jobs for unskilled labor. This means that the situation encourages large numbers of undocumented workers.
- Because of their undocumented state, migrant workers are subject to abuse by employers. And because there is a large pool of workers that can be abused, wages for documented workers are hurt as well.
- Since the enactment of NAFTA, wages for Mexican workers have dropped by 22%. Unable to compete against U.S. government subsidized factory-farmed corn, Mexican farmers have been driven off their family lands. The Mexican government has admitted that 82% of the working population has less income than they need.
- The U.S. economy has depended upon migrant workers from Mexico since early on. In the 1940s, due to a shortage resulting from the world war, the U.S. government officially invited Mexicans to work as farm laborers. The "bracero" program sent workers to all but 6 states, and lasted until the 1980s.
- Contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of undocumented workers pay taxes, and are less likely to be involved in crime.
- Also contrary to popular belief, in the majority of cases (90%), U.S. workers experience a wage increase as a result of the presence of immigrant workers.

## What would Comprehensive Immigration Reform do?

- Create Legal Avenues to enter the U.S. Revise our visa policies so that the number of work visas issued better matches employer demand in the U.S., and provide full labor rights, job portability, and a path to permanent residence over time for those who would not displace U.S. workers.
- Create a Path to Legalization for those already in the U.S. Workers who have not committed violent offences would be able to earn legal status, thus restoring the rule of law.
- Reduce the Multi-Year Backlogs in visa applications. The current wait of 7-10 (and sometimes up to 20) years breaks up families, which are the cornerstone of society. Backlogs for employment-based visas encourages undocumented workers and hurts our economy.
- Secure our borders humanely while allowing the flow of documented people and commerce. Smart enforcement should include effective inspections and screening practices, fair proceedings, efficient processing, and strategies that crack down on criminal smugglers and employers who exploit workers. At the same time, our border security practices must facilitate the cross-border flow of goods and people that is essential to our economy.

*(Adapted from Making the Case for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).)*

Representative Gutierrez's bill—Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity (CIR ASAP) Act of 2009—would address these points. For this reason, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) supports CIR ASAP (H.R. 4321).