



World Relief Letter to the House of Representatives Regarding Immigration Reform July 8th, 2013

World Relief has worked to serve refugees and other immigrants for many years, and have found that they contribute to our society in countless ways. The Bible commands us to welcome the stranger. Modern reality also requires us to embrace the immigrant population, many of whom are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and a growing force in the church.

We know that some immigrants have violated immigration law by entering this country illegally or overstaying a valid visa, and there are many reasons why they have done so. They may have had to flee quickly to escape persecution, civil strife, or natural disasters in their own countries. Many others came to this country because they needed to support their families, who are from countries where they cannot earn a living wage. Many immigrants have applied legitimately for the right to live in this country with their family members, but must wait for many years for final approval due to backlogs in the system. Immigration is a defining feature of America's history and will continue to be an important issue for America's future.

World Relief believes that a comprehensive approach to immigration reform is required to address the complex and outmoded immigration system that currently exists. For example, current law has created numerous barriers for legitimate refugees abroad and seekers of asylum in the U.S. to receive the protection they deserve. Additionally, approximately eleven million "undocumented" immigrants currently live in the United States, and more than three million U.S. citizen children live in families headed by an undocumented immigrant.

We do not condone any violations of the law, such as living in the United States illegally, but we recognize that our complex and inadequate immigration system has made it nearly impossible for many of the hard-working people that our country needs, to enter or remain in the country legally and/or reunite with family members.

We believe that a comprehensive approach is required that goes beyond border protection alone and addresses the current problems of our immigration system, by looking at root causes of immigration, developing workable solutions, and providing dignified relief to the millions of immigrants who are contributing to our communities, despite their lack of legal status. We also advocate for reforms that better protect those seeking refugee and asylum status.

We advocate that any legislation that is passed include the following specific principles:

- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;
- The creation of more responsive legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner that prevents their exploitation and assures them due process;
- The option for those individuals and families who are already living in the U.S. and working hard, to apply for permanent legal status and citizenship if they choose to do so, by meeting specific application criteria; and
- Border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of enforcing our laws.

We urge the House of Representatives to work together in a bipartisan fashion to pass immigration reform this year that reflects the above principles.