

STATEMENT OF CARDINAL FRANCIS GEORGE
ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO
PRESIDENT, UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS
JUNE 18, 2009

On behalf of the United States Catholic Bishops, gathered in San Antonio, Texas, at our annual spring meeting, I would ask President Barack Obama and congressional leaders of both parties to work together to fashion and enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation before the end of the year.

It has been clear for years that the United States immigration system requires repair and that reform legislation should not be delayed.

We urge respect and observance of all just laws, and we do not approve or encourage the illegal entry of anyone into our country. From a humanitarian perspective, however, our fellow human beings, who migrate to support their families, continue to suffer at the hands of immigration policies that separate them from family members and drive them into remote parts of the American desert, sometimes to their deaths. This suffering should not continue.

Now is the time to address this pressing humanitarian issue which affects so many lives and undermines basic human dignity. Our society should no longer tolerate a status quo that perpetuates a permanent underclass of persons and benefits from their labor without offering them legal protections. As a moral matter, we must resolve the legal status of those who are here without proper documentation so that they can fully contribute their talents to our nation's economic, social and spiritual well being.

Only through comprehensive reform can we restore the rule of law to our nation's immigration system.

We urge President Obama and congressional leaders to meet as soon as possible to discuss and draft comprehensive immigration reform legislation, with the goal of making it law by the end of 2009. The Catholic bishops of our country stand ready to assist in this effort.