



## ***Pastors' Declaration on Border Security and Immigration Reform***

### ***Preamble***

In the course of our history as a nation, challenges and crisis moments have arisen that required principled leadership and the laying aside of partisan politics. Such is the need before us in our day regarding the escalating illegal immigration crisis and the security of our national borders.

It is clear and evident that the tangible and present crisis regarding the state of our national border security and immigration system must be addressed rapidly, justly and humanely with equal regard to both rule of law and God-given value of every individual. Holy Scriptures demand that justice and compassion be balanced with neither improperly dominant over the other in our hearts and our laws.

Therefore, we as pastoral leaders called by God to proclaim His truth and acting in the tradition of our nation's history to lift our voice in the public square when there are those societal issues that demand just action by our governing representatives, do hereby present this statement of general principles and call on our elected state and national leaders to:

- End the contentious political posturing and bickering that is polarizing our nation.
- Engage in genuine dialogue and come together to arrive at real solutions to this crisis.
- Listen to the voice of the majority of people who demand secure borders, credible enforcement of our current immigration laws by our federal government, reforming the broken immigration system, and humanely addressing those who have entered the country illegally.
- Recognize and acknowledge that this crisis would already be resolved if past administrations and Congresses had exercised courageous leadership and had been willing to work together to take the necessary steps for resolution.
- Pledge to resolve this crisis by taking courageous, decisive and immediate steps to deal with and implement the following call to action.

*We call on every member of the Texas State Legislature and the United States Congress to publicly support and provide proactive leadership to see this present crisis resolved in a humane way that includes but is not limited to the following steps IN THIS ORDER of priority:*

### **Step One – Secure our National Borders First**

- It is the first business of our government to protect the safety and welfare of citizens against “enemies foreign and domestic.” The well established fact that drug cartels, gang members, other criminal elements and now Middle Eastern operatives linked to Islamic terrorism are freely moving across our southern border has created an urgent national security crisis.

#### **ACTION NEEDED:**

- All borders, with specific priority to the southern border of the United States, must be secured as soon as possible using whatever means necessary to stop all entry from points other than regulated crossing stations.
- Fences, adequately armed U.S. military presence, electronic surveillance, increased Border Patrol forces, full enforcement of all existing immigration laws and policy changes protecting citizens as

well as law enforcement from persecution, prosecution or lawsuits when acting to protect life and property are examples of first steps that need to be implemented.

## **Step Two – Reform the Immigration System**

- The process of entering the country legally is fraught with red tape, fraud, delays, unacceptable costs, unrealistically low quotas and inhumane treatment for many if not most people who desire to emigrate to the U.S. temporarily for education or work, or permanently as citizens. This system needs to be reformed so people legitimately seeking temporary or permanent residency in this country are treated with dignity and respect.

### **ACTION NEEDED:**

- Government agencies charged with assessing and processing immigration requests are severely understaffed and inadequately funded to handle the backlog of immigration applications. Current staffing at American embassies charged with assessing and processing immigration applications should be better trained, better screened and/or replaced as necessary with uniform standards provided for greater accountability.
- Congress needs to reform immigration laws to address significant backlogs under quotas for highly skilled immigrants; to establish meaningful quotas for semi and low-skilled workers as well as enact a temporary worker program so that where there are proven shortages of U. S. workers, there is a mechanism by which workers can enter legally while maintaining their family ties to their home countries. Congress also needs to modernize the verification process by which employers determine who is authorized to work in the U. S.

## **Step Three – Implement a just process to legal status for specified illegal immigrants**

- While illegal immigrants have violated immigration laws to enter the country or overstayed their lawfully permitted time, there needs to be a process of providing those who qualify, are involved in lawful commerce and wish to remain here a means of doing so either as guest workers or eventually as citizens, with the proviso that they be required to display proficiency in the English language and critical facts about our American history, the basis of our constitutional republic and the duties of citizenship within a reasonable period of time to qualify for either status.

### **ACTION NEEDED:**

- Execute a fixed period of open registration for those here illegally, and provide a temporary work visa which contains requirement of adequate civil penalties yet does not require them to return to their country of origin and provides protection of legal status. Once that registration period has passed, any violation of immigration laws should result in immediate deportation.
- Any person found to have committed crimes against property or person while here, or with a felony criminal record in his or her home country, should be denied legal status of any kind and deported.
- Effectively enforce laws which prohibit non-citizens from receiving entitlement to non-emergency government services unless specifically adopted by legislative process at the state or federal level.

*We the undersigned pastors declare our commitment to using our voice and influence in every way possible to support these principles. We will also publicly hold accountable those who choose to remain silent, who are divisive for purely political purposes, or who act in opposition to these principles.*

*(This list reflects the drafting committee and initial signers upon draft approval)*

First	Last	Position	Church	City
Don	Bergstrom	Senior Pastor	Houston's First Church of God	Houston
Rickie	Bradshaw	Senior Pastor	First Southwest Baptist Church	Houston
Charles	Burchett	Senior Pastor	First Baptist Church	Kirbyville
Billy	Burton	Executive Pastor	Encourager Church	Houston
Kirbyjon	Caldwell	Senior Pastor	Windsor Village United Methodist	Houston
Howard	Cameron	Senior Pastor	Trinity Church	Beaumont
Hernan	Castano	Senior Pastor	Iglesia Rios de Aceite	Houston
James	Clark	Senior Pastor	First Baptist Church	Tomball
Ross	Cullins	Senior Pastor	Solid Rock Baptist Church	Humble
Willie	Davis	Senior Pastor	MacGregor Palm Comm. Baptist	Houston
Larry	Emerson	Senior Pastor	North Central Assembly of God	Spring
Steve	Emerson	Assoc. Pastor	North Central Assembly of God	Spring
David	Fannin	Senior Pastor	Nassau Bay Baptist Church	Houston
David	Fleming	Senior Pastor	Champion Forest Baptist Church	Houston
Sonny	Foraker	Senior Pastor	First Baptist Church	Pearland
Jay	Gross	Senior Pastor	West Conroe Baptist Church	Conroe
Mark	Hartman	Senior Pastor	Sugar Creek Baptist Church	Sugar Land
Juan Carlos	Herdia	Spanish Pastor	Sugar Creek Baptist Church	Sugar Land
Mike	Hooper	Pastor	Grace Community Church North Campus	The Woodlands
Khan	Huynh	Senior Pastor	Vietnamese Baptist Church	Houston
Robert	Jefferson	Senior Pastor	Cullen Baptist Church, Houston Ministers Against Crime	Houston
Kjell	Johannson	Senior Pastor	Living Branch Church	Conroe
Elmo	Johnson	Senior Pastor	Rose of Sharon Baptist Church	Houston
Melvin	Johnson	Senior Pastor	Heart of Christ Community Church	Brazoria
Tony	Krishack	Senior Pastor	Victory Christian Center	Houston
Jesus	Lemus	Senior Pastor	Casa De Restauracion	Houston
Lloyd	Maddoux	Senior Pastor	First Assembly of God	Conroe
Jerry	Martin	Senior Pastor	Light of the World Fellowship	Humble
Ismael	Martinez	Senior Pastor	Iglesias Cristo Viene	Baytown
Leopoldo	Mata	Senior Pastor	Iglesia Bautista Casa Del	Houston
Gregg	Matte	Senior Pastor	Houston's First Baptist Church	Houston
Cliff	Mayton	Senior Pastor	Memorial Baptist Church	Spring
John	McCrutcheon	Senior Pastor	Joint Heirs Fellowship Church	Houston
Ramon	Medina	Spanish Pastor	Champion Forest Baptist Church	Houston
John	Morgan	Senior Pastor	Sagemont Church	Houston
Joshua	Ong	Senior Pastor	Church of the Living God	Houston
Dario	Parish	Senior Pastor	Comunidad de Gracia	Houston
Dave	Peterson	Senior Pastor	Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church	Houston
Bob	Phillips	Senior Pastor	Encourager Church	Houston
Doug	Richnow	Assoc. Rector	St. John the Divine Episcopal	Houston
Steve	Riggle	Senior Pastor	Grace Community Church	Houston
Erik	Roedahl	Senior Pastor	My Father's House	Beaumont
Fernando	Ruata	Senior Assoc. Pastor	Encourager Church	Houston
Ryan	Rush	Senior Pastor	Bannockburn Baptist Church	Austin
Joe	Salcido	Senior Pastor	Centro Vida Life Center	El Paso
Ted	Seago	Senior Pastor	Grace Community Church	Magnolia
Jeffrey	Seif	Senior Pastor	Resurrection Life Church	Midlothian
Brad	Steel		Open Door Mission	Spring
Oliver	Stillwell	Senior Pastor	First Assembly of God	La Porte

Doug	Stringer		Somebody Cares America	Houston
Tom	Victor		The Great Commission Coalition	Kingwood
Rene and Amelia	Villafranca	Senior Pastor	Comunidad de Amor	Texas City
Scot	Wall	Senior Pastor	Magnolia Bible Church	Magnolia
Dave	Welch	Executive Director	Texas Pastor Council	Houston
Dan	Woody	Teaching Elder	Grace Community Church	Magnolia