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## Statement on Proposed Immigration Bills in 2012

By the Catholic Bishops of Kansas

February 13, 2012

For years, the issue of immigration, and in particular the question of what to do about illegal immigration, has bedeviled policymakers at every level of government. It often seems that the only point of agreement is that something must be done.

While good people can disagree about what immigration policies would be best, we do believe that policymakers should take an approach that puts considerations of fairness, justice, and compassion above those of political expediency. That said, balancing these principles is not easy.

The Catholic faith recognizes the dignity of each and every human person, including for example immigrants, whether in our country legally or otherwise. Deuteronomy 10:19 tells us that *"You must befriend the alien for you were once aliens yourselves,"* and Matthew 25:35 that *"I was a stranger and you welcomed me."*

However, Scripture is also clear regarding the rule of law: *"Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake ... Give honor to all, love the community, fear God, honor the king"* (1 Peter 2:13, 17; cf. Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1).

Therefore, the ideal resolution to the immigration question would uphold both the principle of compassion to the stranger and the principle of the rule of law. Unfortunately, it is clear that after decades of allowing America's broken immigration system to go unfixed, there is no longer any chance of passing legislation approaching anything near perfect fairness. Any solution will inevitably be imperfect. This does not mean, however, that good cannot be done.

The Kansas Legislature will be considering a series of immigration-related bills in the

MOST REVEREND MICHAEL O. JACKELS, S.T.D.  
DIOCESE OF WICHITA

VERY REVEREND BARRY E. BRINKMAN, J.C.L.  
DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATOR – DIOCESE OF SALINA

MOST REVEREND JOSEPH F. NAUMANN,  
*Chairman of Board*  
ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

House Fed & State Affairs

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coming days. There is much that we find worthy of support in the Kansas Workers and Community Partnership Act. It proposes a humane approach to those living here without authorization who want only to have a job and provide for their families. However, even this well-intended bill points us towards the reality that immigration is ultimately a national question that requires a national solution, as federal authorization would be necessary to implement this bill's provisions. This is yet another reminder of the federal government's responsibility to provide a coherent, efficient, and fair immigration system....a responsibility that remains unfulfilled.

We would ask legislators to bear this fact of federal responsibility for immigration policy in mind as they consider all of the immigration bills before them, including those other proposals that focus on state and local-level enforcement of federal law. Do such proposals offer the prospect of a fair, humane, and just solution to our immigration situation? Or are they likely to only succeed in making life more difficult for those here without authorization?

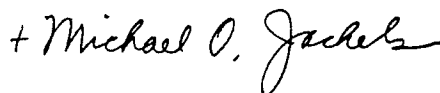
Finally, we must also voice our opposition to any legislation that would criminalize the offering of assistance to a person here without authorization. We do not believe that a church or charity should be held liable for ministering to an illegal immigrant in material and/or spiritual terms. In this respect, language in HB 2576 is a concern.

We pray that your deliberations will lead you to an outcome that Kansas can be proud of. Thank you for your consideration.


Yours in Christ,




Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann  
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas



Most Reverend Michael O. Jackels  
Bishop of Wichita



Most Reverend John B. Brungardt  
Bishop of Dodge City



Very Reverend Barry E. Brinkman  
Diocesan Administrator of Salina