

DOMINICAN SISTERS MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

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We wish to speak to the reality of Southwest Kansas. Our economy is mainly based in agriculture and construction. We have no large employers in other areas except for education and health care.

The map of Kansas shows that the unemployment rate for the southwest quadrant of the state is lower than that of the rest of the state. It is also much lower than the national rate. Each time that the national news publishes that Finney County is third in the nation for the lowest rate around 4.3% an influx of persons come from Wisconsin, Florida, California and so forth. They have been out of work for so long that they are desperate.

The map of Kansas also shows that the southwest quadrant of the state has the highest concentration of immigrants. The reality is that they make up a significant enough part of our work force to be necessary to the economic health of this area.

From the legislative coffees and other meetings and contacts I have had, the employers' experiences are that "white faces" as they call the Anglos do not become long term employees. The US push to get an education and find less strenuous work at higher pay has our citizens 35 and under aiming for more. When they are desperate enough to try the agricultural jobs, they find it too difficult, too cold, too hot and/or too smelly for them to endure. After a couple of days to a couple of weeks, they quit.

Also from the above sources we have learned that the employers who think that some of their employees may be working with a made up social security number are so wanting a way to help them get a work permit. They may have been loyal workers for 10 or more years who have overstayed their permit. The employer has been unable to hire workers to replace them. Since they have no skill classified as in scarce demand, there is no way to obtain legal status for them. The employer does not wish to jeopardize the status of such wonderful workers and their families so they will not be testifying for fear of putting them on the radar of ICE.

We strongly urge you to find some way to allow our employers to continue to have a sufficient work force. Whether that is HB 2712 or some other means. We also urge you to never adopt the any of the E-Verify statutes. Our state economy is tenuous enough without jeopardizing its health in the whole southwest quadrant of the state.

Thank you for considering these points.

Dominican Sisters Ministry of Presence
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Sister Janice Thome, OP

House Federal & State Affairs

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