



Oklahoma Conference
of Churches

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

In light of our previous voice on the issue of Immigration Reform, it is with much thought that the Oklahoma Conference of Churches has developed the attached statement to represent our concern about the new law going into effect on November 1. Our position has been clear as evidenced by our visiting with the Governor (His representative) prior to his signing the law; we are not in agreement with the law in its present form.

After much conversation and deliberation among Communion Leaders and the Executive Committee, we submit the attached statement, per our mandate to be involved in this our community by sharing our concerns and views. Some of our Leaders have already released statements for their Communion relating to HB1804 – United Church of Christ, Roman Catholic and United Methodist. Please refer to those individual statements from the individual Communion headquarters or by contacting the office of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches.

Blessings and Care,

George E. Young, Sr.
President, Board of Directors
Oklahoma Conference of Churches

African Methodist Episcopal\$African Methodist Episcopal Zion\$Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)\$
Christian Methodist Episcopal\$Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma \$Cumberland Presbyterian\$Episcopal\$Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America \$Mennonites\$Presbyterian Church USA\$Progressive Oklahoma Baptist State Convention\$Reformed
Church in America\$Roman Catholic\$
Society of Friends\$United Church of Christ\$United Methodist

Unified to offer love, justice and hope to each other and God=s world.

Statement of OCC on Implementation of HB1804 on November 1, 2007.

As federal immigration bills moved to the forefront of an intense national immigration debate, and then receded with little resolution in the last year, states, including Oklahoma, weighed in with punitive, anti-immigrant proposals, purportedly passed to address the complex and difficult issues presented by the presence of undocumented persons within our borders. HB1804, the *Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2007*, scheduled to be implemented on November 1, 2007, represents one of these disappointing and unacceptable responses to the current immigration dilemma. The Oklahoma Conference of Churches joins its voice to the growing opposition to the impending implementation of HB1804.

The United States is home to some 12 million undocumented persons- persons who landscape our yards, serve us drinks and meals, clean our hotel rooms, take care of our children, construct and roof our houses, and provide essential workers critical to our society. Clearly, the labor market needs these workers to provide the necessary labor force to ensure a vibrant economy.

HB1804 does not and cannot address the social justice issues inherent in our failed federal policy on immigration. HB1804 represents a disastrous effort to confront the myriad of issues presented by the presence of the undocumented all around us. As such, HB1804 instigates fear and prejudice, dividing our state and isolating those brothers and sisters born outside our borders.

Many mainline churches and synagogues have been vanguards in opposing both federal and state immigration proposals that are restrictive and punitive. The Oklahoma Conference of Churches, in joining the opposition to the implementation of HB1804, relies on the principles of social justice inherent in our various traditions, including a recognition that human rights derive not from membership in a state or from immigration status, but rather from the inherent worth and dignity of every person made in the image of God.

Undocumented migrants, some of the most vulnerable among us, present, perhaps, the greatest challenge to our lives and our consciences. Yet we know we are called to confront our own fears and prejudices as we respond to God's call to conversion, a call ever present in our Scripture. In the Old Testament we are instructed: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34)." Likewise, in the New Testament, Jesus challenges Christians to care for the vulnerable (cf. Matthew 25:35), reminding us that "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me (Matthew 25:40)."

We urge all our brothers and sisters to consider carefully the moral dimensions of our state and federal immigration public policy. We enjoin them to reject policies and laws, laws such as HB1804, which fail to uphold the human dignity of each person, whether documented or undocumented, and fail to embrace and celebrate a rich and diverse society.
