

Statement of
The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
Vermont
October 8, 2009

Statement Of Chairman Patrick Leahy,
"Comprehensive Immigration Reform: Faith-Based Perspectives"
Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Border Security
October 8, 2009

I want to thank Senator Schumer for holding this hearing today, and for the work he has done to advance this important issue. Timely, smart immigration reform is crucial in order to secure our borders, ensure that American workers are respected, bring millions of undocumented people out of the shadows, and support American farms and businesses. And in doing so, we have the opportunity to reaffirm our heritage as a diverse and welcoming country.

Religious organizations are at the forefront of immigration reform. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, Esperanza, the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the American Jewish Council, and the Muslim Public Affairs Council have all devoted extraordinary time and energy to ensure that immigration reform remains at the forefront of legislative priorities. These are but a few among many organizations of faith that are working toward the common goal of immigration reform. I especially want to welcome Cardinal McCarrick to the hearing today.

People of faith have been among the clearest and most consistent voices in this debate, calling for reform that is humane, effective, and that affords greater prominence to the universal value of family unity. Regardless of differences among the various faiths, I am confident that the values of human decency and dignity bind the wider religious community together. I hope that we can all agree that these values must form our guiding principles throughout this debate.

Far too often, congressional debate on immigration reform has focused predominantly on enforcement or border security, with insufficient regard to the lives that are affected most directly. While security and enforcement issues will be an important part of any reform effort, we must make sure that the moral dimension of immigration reform is not overshadowed. As the legislative process unfolds, we must not lose sight of the fact that every decision we make will affect real people whose hopes and dreams are entrusted to us.

I see genuine opportunity for positive change in our immigration system. We have a President who is committed to doing the right thing, Members of Congress who care deeply about this issue, and an immigrant and advocacy community that continues to devote enormous energy and

passion to improving our current system of immigration. I thank the witnesses for being here today.

####