

## Doing Justice in Jesus' Name Immigration Reform

Working for a just society includes reforming our laws and policies to assure the right treatment of immigrants and refugees. *"When foreigners reside among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigners residing among you must be treated as native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God."* (Leviticus 19:33-34)

We encourage you to do justice for the foreigners in our midst by becoming informed about the U.S. immigration system and pressing public officials for reform. Today we are offering you information on how to support the DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors). This bill (S.952) was introduced by our U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-III), but is opposed by U.S. Senator Mark Kirk (R-III). The following material is provided to help you make an informed decision for action.

You might find the following ECC resources helpful in your deliberations:

ECC Resource Paper on The Ministry of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2011/01/35.-Covenant-Resource-Paper-CMJ-5.17.pdf>

ECC Resolution on Immigration 2006: <http://www.covchurch.org/who-we-are/beliefs/resolutions/resolutions-from-2000-2009/2006-immigration/>

### Step 1: Summary of the Legislation

From the Web site of Sen. Dick Durban: <http://durbin.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hot-topics?ID=43eaa136-a3de-4d72-bc1b-12c3000f0ae9>

The full text of S.952 can be accessed from this site.

**The DREAM Act is a bipartisan bill that would allow a select group of immigrant students to contribute fully to America.**

The DREAM Act would allow a select group of immigrant students with great potential to contribute more fully to America. These young people were brought to the U.S. as children and should not be punished for their parents' mistakes. The DREAM Act would give these students a chance to earn legal status if they:

- Came to the U.S. as children (15 or under)
- Are long-term U.S. residents (continuous physical presence for at least five years)
- Have good moral character
- Graduate from high school or obtain a GED
- Complete two years of college or military service in good standing

**The DREAM Act would benefit the U.S. Armed Forces.** Tens of thousands of highly-qualified, well-educated young people would enlist in the Armed Forces if the DREAM Act becomes law. The Defense Department's FY 2010-12 Strategic Plan includes the DREAM Act as a means to help "shape and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force." Defense Secretary Gates, who supports the DREAM Act, says it "will result in improved recruitment results and attendant gains in unit manning and military performance." General Colin Powell has also endorsed the DREAM Act, saying, "Immigration is what's keeping this country's lifeblood moving forward."

**The DREAM Act would stimulate the American economy.** A UCLA study concluded that DREAM Act participants could contribute \$1.4-\$3.6 trillion to the U.S. economy during their working lives. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who supports the DREAM Act, says, "They are just the kind of immigrants we need to help solve our unemployment problem. It is senseless for us to chase out the home-grown talent that has the potential to contribute so significantly to our society."

**The DREAM Act includes important restrictions to prevent abuse.** DREAM Act participants are not eligible for Pell and other federal grants and are subject to tough criminal penalties for fraud. DREAM Act applicants must apply within one year of obtaining a high school degree/GED or the bill's enactment; and must prove eligibility by a preponderance of the evidence. To be eligible, an individual must submit biometric information; undergo background checks and a medical exam; register for the Selective Service; demonstrate the ability to read, write, and speak English; and demonstrate knowledge of the history and government of the U.S. An individual cannot qualify if he or she is ineligible for immigration relief on criminal or national security grounds.

**The DREAM Act has broad bipartisan support in Congress and from the American people.** In the 111th Congress, the DREAM Act passed the House and received a strong bipartisan majority vote from 55 Senators. According to a recent poll by Opinion Research Corporation, 70% of likely voters favor the DREAM Act, including 60% of Republicans.

**The DREAM Act is supported by labor, business, education, civil rights and religious groups,** including the AFL-CIO, the National PTA, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the CEOs of Fortune 100 companies like Microsoft and Pfizer, and dozens of colleges and universities.

## **Step 2: Contact Senator Mark Kirk**

Contact the Senator by U.S. mail at  
Senator Mark Kirk, 524 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510

OR

Contact the Senator through his Web site at  
[http://kirk.senate.gov/?p=comment\\_on\\_legislation](http://kirk.senate.gov/?p=comment_on_legislation)

### **Step 3: Compose your Letter**

Below are two sample letters. You may use content from either of these in your letter or compose your own.

#### ***Sample One***

Dear Senator Kirk,

I am writing to you to express the urgent need to pass the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors). The DREAM Act is a bipartisan proposal, which would create a pathway to citizenship for thousands of young student who were brought to the United States years ago as children. These children have grown up in our communities and include honor roll students, star athletes, talented artists, and aspiring teachers, doctors, and U.S. soldiers.

Even though they were brought to the U.S. years ago as children, they face unique barriers to higher education, are unable to work legally in the U.S., and often live in constant fear of detection by immigration authorities. Our immigration law currently has no mechanism to consider the special equities and circumstance of such students. The DREAM Act would eliminate this flaw.

By enacting the DREAM Act, Congress would legally recognize what is de facto true: these young people belong here. If congress fails to act this year, another entire class of outstanding, law-abiding high school students will graduate without being able to plan for the future, and some will be removed from their homes to countries they barely know. This tragedy will cause America to lose a vital asset: an educated class of promising immigrant students, who have demonstrated a commitment to hard work and a strong desire to be contributing member of our society.

I urge you to vote for the DREAM Act.

[Your Name and Address]

#### ***Sample Two***

Dear Senator Kirk,

As a Christian, I believe my faith calls me to view all people, regardless of citizenship status, and made in the "image of God" and deserving of respect; to show compassion for the stranger and love and mercy for my neighbor; and to balance the rule of law with the call to oppose unjust laws and systems when they violate human dignity.

These biblical principles compel me to support immigration reform that is consistent with humanitarian values, supports families, provides a pathway to citizenship for immigrant workers already in the U.S., expands legal avenues for worker to enter the U.S. with their

rights and due process fully protected, and examines solutions to address the root causes of migration.

To the end I strongly urge you to vote for the DREAM Act sponsored by Senators Dick Durbin and Richard Lugar. The DREAM Act would allow a select group of immigrant students with great potential to contribute more fully to America by creating a pathway to citizenship for students brought to the United States years ago as children. The DREAM Act would benefit the U.S. Armed Forces, allowing tens of thousands of highly-qualified, well-educated young people to enlist in the Armed Forces. The DREAM Act would stimulate the American economy. A more educated workforce which contributes to our tax base is precisely the economic stimulus we need in these hard times.

[Your Name and Address]

#### **Step 4: Mail your Letter**

Put a stamp on the envelope and mail your letter or send it by email.

#### **Additional Resources**

For additional information on this topic attend a meeting of ***Justice with Grace*** at Grace, or the ***North Side Family Support Network*** of which Grace is a member.

The following organizations offer information on immigration reform:

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)

<http://icirr.org>

Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

[www.faithandimmigration.org](http://www.faithandimmigration.org)

Sojourners

[www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)

Esperanza

[www.esperanza.us](http://www.esperanza.us)