



COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

January 23, 2006

Dear Vincentian Leaders:

Enclosed you will find a statement from Bishop Gerald Barnes, U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops Migration Committee Chair, regarding the Immigration Bill that has been passed by the House of Representatives and will now go before the Senate. I believe that our Voice of the Poor Committee and the USCCB have formulated the appropriate positions on dealing with this difficult subject; addressing the protection of our borders, human rights, and the economic needs of our country. Since the House Bill is clearly not balanced and places the Catholic Church, The Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its members in jeopardy, it is important that our leadership become informed on the subject, so that we can educate our membership of this threat now. This is important because a call to action with the Senate will have to be done quickly and effectively.

Yours in Vincent and Frederic,

Joe Flannigan
National President

JDF/sab
Enclosure



House of Representatives Immigration Bill

HR4437 (Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005) was passed by the House in December. It seeks to criminalize those who are undocumented and living in the U.S. (estimated at 11 million). In addition it seeks to punish U.S. citizens and permanent residents who come in contact with them. This bill has the potential to punish charities that give help to anyone that walks in, who may be undocumented. Bishop Gerald Barnes USCCB Migration Committee Chair:

More specifically, the application of criminal penalties to individuals, including U.S. citizens, who assist aliens without legal status could jeopardize church programs which provide basic needs and life-saving assistance to these individuals. Current federal law does not require humanitarian groups to ascertain legal status of an individual prior to providing assistance. However, in our view, the provisions in Section 202 of the legislation would place parish, diocesan, and social service program staff at risk of criminal prosecution simply for performing their job. It also could apply to health care personnel or U.S. citizens who provide urgent or life-saving assistance to an undocumented individual.

See: <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/hr4437.shtml>

HR4437 as passed by the House is found at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>
Since passage in the House, HR4437 was received by the Senate December 17, 2005.

To find out how representatives voted go to the US House of Representatives 109th Congress (2005) Roll Call Votes at: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2005/>

Find Roll No. 661 and click on "661" It shows how each member voted on the issue.

References:

1. Position Paper on Immigration is found at:
http://www.voiceofthepoor.org/position_papers.htm
2. Immigration is also listed in the SVDP 2005 Legislative Agenda approved by the Trustees. It is found at: http://www.voiceofthepoor.org/legislative_updates.htm
3. "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope" found at: <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml> (Bishops of Mexico and the United States together released the pastoral statement.)