

Statement of Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes
Bishop of San Bernardino
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration

On

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005

July 19, 2005

On May 12, 2005, the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 (S. 1033, HR 2330) was introduced in Congress. The legislation seeks to repair the current U.S. immigration system, a system which is broken and needs reform.

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 represents a comprehensive and bipartisan approach to reforming our broken immigration system. It creates legal avenues for migrant workers to enter the United States in a safe and orderly manner. It provides an opportunity for immigrants in the United States to work toward permanent residency. It also provides additional visas for families to be reunited through the family preference system.

For these reasons, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration supports the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005. This legislative proposal best reflects principles for immigration reform set forth by the United States bishops.

We look forward to working with the sponsors of the legislation and others to include additional important provisions to the measure. These would include additional labor protections in the essential worker program for both U.S. and foreign workers; mechanisms to ensure that migrants are treated humanely by enforcement personnel; and provisions which allow for the involvement of community organizations in the implementation of the new program.

As Congress considers immigration reform, we urge all parties to engage the debate in a civil manner so that all sides can work together to fashion an immigration reform package which is humane and in the best interests of our nation.

We commend the sponsors of the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 and urge members of Congress to support this important initiative. We urge President Bush to work with the sponsors and members of Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation during the 109th Congress.