

**Religious Organizations Support  
Hatch/Menendez/Nelson/Gillibrand Amendment to  
Homeland Security Appropriations Bill**

July 8, 2009

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to ask your support of Senate Amendment Number 1429, which will soon be offered by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Bill Nelson (D-FL), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Bill. Among its provisions, the amendment would extend authorization for the Special Immigrant Non-Minister portion of the Religious Worker Visa program for a period of three years, and includes provisions that direct the Department of Homeland Security to continue to build on its success in ensuring that the program is properly used.

The Special Immigrant Non-Minister portion of the Religious Worker Visa program permits foreign-born non-minister religious workers, both religious and lay persons, to enter into the United States to perform pastoral and social services on behalf of religious institutions. These workers perform a variety of tasks that assist the individual denomination but also the greater community. They work in religious schools, design and build temples, staff soup kitchens, homeless shelters and community centers, and perform numerous other critical religious services.

The DHS Office of the Inspector General reported just last month that a comprehensive regulatory overhaul in 2008, combined with broad use of site visits and centralized adjudication of applications have contributed to the integrity and security in the program.

Without enactment of the Hatch/Menendez/Nelson/Gillibrand amendment, this important provision will expire at the end of the current fiscal year. We strongly urge you to support this important amendment, which would assist the role of religious groups in the community and help local communities around the nation.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

Agudath Israel of America  
Catholic Health Association

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.  
Church Communities International  
Church World Service  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society  
Hindu American Foundation  
Episcopal Church  
Franciscan Action Network  
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service  
Mennonite Central Committee, Washington, D.C.  
National Association of Evangelicals  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints  
The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, MA  
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
World Relief