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JANUARY:

ASSOCIATED PRESS: Possible GOP candidates pitch at forum in Iowa

By Thomas Beaumont, The Associated Press

January 25, 2015

<http://www.columbian.com/news/2015/jan/24/possible-gop-candidates-pitch-at-forum/>

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The robust Christian right in early-voting Iowa plays an outside role in helping determine the Republican presidential nominee, a political reality not lost on the parade of would-be 2016 candidates trying to draw attention at a Saturday gathering of social conservatives.

Govs. Chris Christie of New Jersey and Scott Walker of Wisconsin, former Govs. Rick Perry of Texas and Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and many others turned the Iowa Freedom Forum into the unofficial launch of the next campaign for the Iowa caucuses. More than 1,000 religious conservatives met at a refurbished theater to hear them pitch their policies and their values.

Christie may have had the most to gain — or lose — from appearing at the forum. Considered a moderate in some GOP circles and a party establishment choice in others, the New Jersey governor tried to connect with grass-roots conservative activists by assuring them that trust is more important than total agreement.

"If you want a candidate who agrees with you 100 percent of the time, I'll give you a suggestion: Go home and look in the mirror. You are the only person you agree with 100 percent of the time," he said. "You'll always know who I am, you'll always know what I believe and you'll always know where I stand."

To back up his conservative credentials, Christie proclaimed his opposition to gay marriage and abortion rights. He also rejected the idea that Republicans could be competitive in traditionally Democratic states by abandoning opposition to abortion rights. "And I'm living proof," he said. In his remarks, Cruz cited the Bible as he challenged caucus participants to back only presidential candidates with a proven conservative track record. "You know what," he said, "talk is cheap. The word tells us you shall know them by their fruits ... Look every candidate in the eye and say 'Don't talk, show me.'"

While he criticized President Barack Obama's foreign policy and other actions, Huckabee warned about the dangers of intraparty fighting. "We don't need to spend the next two years beating each other up in the conservative tent. We need to tell America what's right with this country," he said.

Perry also pointed to the end of the Obama administration: "I got a feeling that after six years of disappointment, of mediocrity and decline, a slow course correction is not what voters are going to be looking for in 2016."

Walker promoted his administration's enactment of voter identification, concealed carry handgun and abortion restriction legislation — all red-meat issues to the conservative audience. For many Republicans, he is best known for beating back a recall effort and then winning re-election.

"You see, I think that sends a powerful message to Republicans in Washington and around the country that if you're not afraid to go big and go bold you can actually get results," Walker said.

Rick Santorum, the former senator from Pennsylvania who won the 2012 Iowa caucuses, said the GOP needs to do a better job convincing working Americans that Republicans are on their side.

"We don't win because too many people don't think we care about them. We have to show them not just by saying we do, but by having policies and a message where they can see it and feel it in us," Santorum said as he called for lower taxes, less regulation and stronger family values.

The forum's sponsor, Rep. Steve King of Iowa, opened the event by asking the crowd, "Do you believe that the next president of the United States is going to be speaking to you today?" The audience erupted in applause and King responded, "As do I."

Among others speaking at the forum were businesswoman Carly Fiorina, Dr. Ben Carson, former vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin and real estate mogul and reality TV star Donald Trump. Missing were two possible candidates considered leading contenders for the nomination: former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and the party's 2012 nominee, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney.

Trump let it be known that he didn't think much of the pair. "You can't have Romney. He choked," Trump said. "You can't have Bush. The last thing we need is another Bush."

In addition to Bush and Romney, also absent from the lineup were Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Marco Rubio of Florida. A forum by King, a hardline conservative who has been particularly vocal about opposing immigration reform, could push some would-be candidates further to the right than they want to go on immigration, education, foreign policy and other issues.

King's record of harsh rhetoric toward immigrants in the U.S. illegally drew protesters to his event. Several were escorted out of the forum by police after chanting "If you become president, will you deport our families?" during speeches by Perry and Christie. Amid the interruption, Christie asked the audience, "Don't they know I'm from New Jersey?"

Few political observers would predict Christie, better known nationally for his union and budget battles, to emerge as the favorite among Iowa's evangelical voters. Yet his appearance Saturday could allow him to make inroads with a group focused as much on ideological purity as defeating the Democrat nominated to follow Obama.

Christie reached beyond many of the others who served up only popular partisan lines Saturday. He called for a second American century, where conservative economic principles and compassion meet.

"We're here to create that America," he said. "You don't do it by pandering. You don't do it by telling people what they want to hear. You do it by telling them the truth."

As an example, Christie said supporting life, the term conservatives use for opposing abortion, means caring for people who become drug-addicted or convicted of crimes.

"Those lives have value, too," he said, prompting a ripple of applause.

(AP story ran all over the country.)

BOSTON GLOBE: Charlie Baker's service signals heft of Hispanic church

By Lisa Wangsness

January 8, 2015

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/01/08/growing-hispanic-church-hosts-inaugural-prayer-service/m5GcCbWogJjMeK6gKLu0jJ/story.html>

On the morning of Governor Deval Patrick's second inauguration, the state's most prominent clergy gathered for an interfaith prayer service at Old South Church, whose great stone edifice in Copley Square is emblematic of historic Boston. Four years earlier, Massachusetts' interreligious elite assembled to bless Patrick's first term at the Old South Meeting House, where the Boston Tea Party began.

Charlie Baker held his preinaugural service Wednesday night in a spare, modern sanctuary completed just last year. It was built to accommodate a burgeoning Spanish-speaking church in Roxbury, Lion of Judah, whose pastor, the Rev. Roberto Miranda, is a revered figure in Boston's

growing Hispanic evangelical Christian community. He is also a passionate culture warrior in the public square.

Lion of Judah exemplifies the ways in which the Christian church continues to evolve in Boston, and in the world: It is becoming more evangelical and more multiethnic, within some of the established mainline denominations — Lion of Judah is an American Baptist Churches congregation — as well as in independent churches.

“The profile of the religious population of American cities has been changing in the last decades; this church, as much as any I can think of anywhere in the city, reflects that change,” said Harvey Cox, a professor at Harvard Divinity School.

And the eagerness of politicians in this largely liberal, secular state to form alliances with clergy such as Miranda underscores the continued importance of the institutional church in the city’s communities of color, and in the life of the city.

In his welcome at the start of the service, Miranda told Baker and Lieutenant Governor-elect Karyn Polito he hoped they would “always seek the approval, the blessing, the wisdom, the illumination of God.

“I think I can presume to speak for all the faith communities here to say that we will be partnering with you, that we will be praying with you, we want you to use us as a resource, as allies, as people who would want to be there in moments of need, to provide whatever counsel we can provide from our spiritual perspective,” he said.

Miranda has made something of a name for himself as a vehement opponent of gay marriage, at times using incendiary rhetoric. Most notably, around the time gay marriage became legal in Massachusetts, he wrote a strategic plan to “reclaim the state of Massachusetts for Jesus Christ,” even suggesting at one point in the 17-page document that there might be “prophetic significance” in the fact that some of the Sept. 11, 2001, attackers began their deadly journey at Logan Airport.

“What took place at the material level is now being carried out at the moral and spiritual level, as the virus of homosexuality and gay marriage begins to spread dramatically all over this nation and perhaps the world,” he wrote.

Carly Burton, interim co-executive director of MassEquality, said that although Miranda may be a welcoming figure for communities of color and immigrant communities, “his homophobic and transphobic rhetoric is particularly damaging for the LGBTQ community, and we hope Charlie Baker doesn’t subscribe to that piece of his message.”

Baker spokesman Tim Buckley said the governor-elect does not. The interfaith service, he said in a statement, was “by no means an endorsement of the remarks made by Dr. Miranda, as Governor-elect Baker and Lieutenant Governor-elect Polito categorically denounce all statements of intolerance made by Dr. Miranda and others toward members of the LGBTQ community.”

But in the larger picture, the Baker team evidently sees an advantage in building a relationship with Miranda and his church. And so, for that matter, have Democratic politicians over the years.

Mayor Martin J. Walsh stopped at Lion of Judah near the end of his 2013 campaign. Miranda prayed, alongside Patrick and President Obama, at the nationally televised interfaith prayer service at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross after the Marathon bombings. And Lion of Judah has worked with City Hall and the State House on a variety of issues, Miranda said in an interview. Baker’s advisers said the governor-elect, who will be sworn in Thursday, chose Lion of Judah for several reasons: It is large and centrally located, and it offered an opportunity for Baker to reach out to the Hispanic population, continuing an effort he made during the campaign to broaden his relationship with constituencies of color.

“Charlie has said repeatedly he wants to govern for 100 percent of the Commonwealth,” Buckley said.

Lion of Judah represents an increasingly important religious and cultural demographic in Boston, and in the country as a whole.

According to the Emmanuel Gospel Center, a nondenominational Christian organization in the South End, the number of Hispanic churches within the city has grown from a handful in the mid-1960s to more than 100 today, even as many churches with largely white, non-Hispanic congregations have closed.

The pastor and his flock are also significant contributors to the community.

Miranda, who emigrated from the Dominican Republic at age 10 and earned his doctorate in Romance languages and literatures at Harvard, turned his back on a promising academic career to build a congregation for Bostonians who are mostly Spanish-speaking and of modest means. Three decades later, Lion of Judah draws about 1,000 people to Sunday worship and engages in an array of social service work.

Its Higher Education Resource Center provides college advising and preparation programs for black and Latino youth. Its ALPHA ministry offers citizenship classes, helps with translation of immigration documents, and provides other services to about 3,000 immigrants annually.

The church trains educators to teach abstinence-based sex education to young people, and church members regularly help feed the homeless.

Speaking to a reporter as workers prepared the new sanctuary for the prayer service, Miranda sounded more soft-spoken than stem-winding.

He did not dissociate himself from his remarks about the evils of homosexuality, but he said he did not want to be defined by them, either.

“The Christian world view, and the Christian scriptures, they oscillate between these two poles, two paradigms — truth and compassion, justice and love, grace and judgment,” he said. “And we live in that tension. Sometimes, you’ll hear a sermon from me and it will be a sermon with a certain amount of harshness. Then, at other times, it will be calling people to mercy and humility and . . . compassion, love, forgiveness.”

He added that his church welcomes all people, including those who are gay.

“What I would beg is for people to see the fullness of what we do, and to also see the interventions of compassion, of mercy, of love, of service to the community, the calls to patience and God’s grace,” he said.

Jeff Bass, executive director of the Emmanuel Gospel Center, SAID HE HAS PUSHED MIRANDA ON HIS APPROACH TO CONTROVERSIAL SOCIAL ISSUES, something BASS VIEWS AS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

But he said Miranda’s leadership extends well beyond the culture wars — and, as a nurturer of the next generation of Hispanic pastors, beyond his own church.

“The largeness of his ministry is more the defining thing,” he said.

BREAD FOR THE WORLD BLOG (Wainer Post): On Immigration, Actions Will Speak Louder than Words

By Andrew Wainer

January 22, 2015

<http://notes.bread.org/2015/01/on-immigration-actions-will-speak-louder-than-words.html>

Words are powerful, but sometimes what’s left unsaid truly tells the tale. That was the case during President Obama’s State of the Union address on Tuesday, where despite the fact that he [barely mentioned](#) immigration, his message was clear: It’s time to move on from past immigration debates and enact comprehensive reform.

In addition, the Republican English-language response [delivered by Sen. Joni Ernst](#) (R-Iowa) was silent on immigration. However, the Spanish-language [response delivered by Rep. Carlos Curbelo](#) (R-FL.) called for immigration reform.

The chances of a major Congressional overhaul of immigration policy during 2015 are slim, but there will be major action next month as the administration begins implementation of President

Obama's 2014 executive action. The action will provide relief from deportation for about 4 million undocumented immigrants.

[This implementation](#) is expected to move forward despite the fact that House Republicans [continue to challenge the action](#) in Congress and in the courts. The Congressional challenge has little chance of success as President Obama has already indicated that he will veto any bill seeking to roll back the action, known as the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program.

But the court challenge [by 25 states, led by Texas](#), could create a fearful atmosphere locally for undocumented immigrants eligible for the program. That will be the true challenge to the DAPA program.

Bread for the World supports the president's action because it will provide more opportunity for low-income people to move out of poverty. The action will allow some undocumented immigrants the ability to seek further education, job training, find new jobs, and start their own or enhance an existing small business.

Research finds that deferred action can lead to an average [wage increase of 8.5 percent for immigrant workers](#) and that it also can have benefits for the U.S.-born and the overall economy. The very few words devoted to this issue by the president and the Republican's rebuttal may be an acknowledgement that in spite of the continuing Congressional rhetoric, both sides know that the debate of words on DAPA is winding down and that the action of implementation is about to begin.

CHRISTIAN POST: Top 10 Politics Stories of 2014

By [Napp Nazworth](#), Christian Post Reporter

January 1, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/top-10-politics-stories-of-2014-131568/>

Religious freedom, gay marriage, abortion, common core, immigration, "Obamacare," and the midterm elections led much of The Christian Post's politics coverage in 2014. Here, ranked by CP editors, are the top 10 Christian Post politics stories of the year.

[...]

6. House Republicans Fail to Pass Immigration Bills, Obama Issues Executive Memo

House Republican leaders appeared poised to pass immigration reform at the beginning of 2014. In January, they announced a set of principles, including a path to legal status, that they would pursue. A week later, however, Speaker of the House [John Boehner announced](#) he would not be able pass immigration reform because too many in his caucus did not trust President Obama to implement the reforms if they became law.

The Evangelical Immigration Table continued to call for a reform of the current immigration system. In June, it [released a documentary, "The Stranger,"](#) which was designed to put a human face on the difficulties caused by the current system.

Shortly after the midterm elections, Obama announced he would implement reforms through an executive memo that provided a temporary legal status for up to five million unauthorized immigrants. The move was highly controversial with some Republicans calling it an unconstitutional use of executive power. The move also [split the EIT](#). Some EIT leaders praised the move while others complained that it would make passage of immigration reform more difficult.

[...]

CHRISTIANITY TODAY (Galli Column): Amnesty is Not a Dirty Word

Christians, of all people, should know that.

By Mark Galli

January 6, 2015

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/januaryfebruary/amnesty-is-not-dirty-word.html>

Even before President Obama announced his executive order this fall to integrate some 5 million illegal immigrants into our political life, charges of “Amnesty!” rang loud and clear.

Like “The Case against Obama’s Amnesty,” which Sen. John Cornyn argued at *National Review* days earlier. Afterward, the charges only rang louder: “Congress hasn’t passed immigration legislation,” announced the Heritage Foundation, “but that hasn’t stopped President Obama from issuing directives that grant amnesty to illegal immigrants.”

The word has been so toxic, pro-reform groups like the Evangelical Immigration Table (a Christian coalition that includes World Vision, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) avoids it like the Ebola virus. Even the President distanced himself from it, saying that giving legal status and work permits to nearly 5 million immigrants is “certainly not amnesty, no matter how often critics say it.”

Why are so many of us frightened of amnesty—defined as “a general pardon for offenses, especially political offenses, against a government”—for illegal immigrants?

Opponents of Obama’s recent order lament a disregard for “the rule of law.” As Kansas’ secretary of state—a devout Baptist and ardent opponent of immigration reform—put it, “I believe in rules and fairness. . . . We can argue it a million ways, but really, what more is there to say?” The argument continues: If we pardon illegal immigrants, law and order will break down, and millions more immigrants will come pouring across our borders, hampering our economy. Other Christians worry about tyranny. Mark Tooley, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, referred to another evangelical leader, saying, “Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president Albert Mohler has critiqued President Obama’s executive amnesty for millions of illegal immigrants as a ‘danger to separation of powers’ that ‘should be unconstitutional.’” Tooley’s argument concludes: If the President gets away with this, we will no longer have the rule of law, but the rule of one man.

Amnesty has been granted rarely in American history—with results more benign than some might imagine. The first amnesty was offered by President George Washington, in 1795, to participants in the Whiskey Rebellion in exchange for their signatures on an oath of loyalty to the United States. Three years after the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson proclaimed unconditional amnesty to all Confederates.

Similarly, in 1977, President Jimmy Carter issued a broad amnesty to Vietnam draft evaders. Carter argued that their crimes were forgiven. This made clear the purpose of an amnesty: not to erase a criminal act or to condone it, but simply to facilitate political reconciliation.

Here’s the point: Opponents of these executive pardons vigorously argued otherwise, but in no case did these edicts lead to legal chaos (more rebellion or more draft evasion)—or to tyranny. Whether it was politically expedient or effective for President Obama to issue his latest executive order; whether and how much should be expected of illegal immigrants on the way to citizenship; how and where to control borders—all of these detailed political questions need to be worked through with care by legislators and concerned citizens. But the one thing we Christians especially should not run from is any action accused of offering “amnesty.”

How can we, of all people, insist on something as unbending as “the rule of law” when, in fact, we bear daily the guilt of breaking the most unbending and righteous of all laws? How can we, of all people, object to reconciling illegal immigrants with our political and social order when we, illegal before God, have been granted amnesty from sin in a free act of grace—no strings attached? How can we, of all people, refuse a preferential option for amnesty, given that “[God] forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:13–14)?

To be clear: One cannot translate a rich theological truth—no matter how splendid—straight into public policy. We live in a fallen world, and yes, we need law and order for society to work. But every society needs more than law and order. Any society worth its salt also needs to practice mercy. Because in the end, the basic law of the universe is mercy.

We, of all people, should know that.
Mark Galli is editor of Christianity Today.

DENVER POST (Torres Letter): Ken Buck is right on immigration

Jan. 12, 2015

<http://blogs.denverpost.com/eletters/2015/01/12/ken-buck-right-immigration/35766/>

Re: *"Ken Buck and Cory Gardner join Congress in new roles," Jan. 7 news story.*

As an evangelical pastor in Greeley, I share the frustration of Rep. Ken Buck regarding previous congressional inaction on immigration reform. Greeley is a diverse community in which hard-working immigrants play an important role, moving our economy forward.

We need to fix our current immigration system. It's sad to see families separated and our communities divided. The current system has created a permanent underclass and affects people with and without documentation every day.

My hope is that Rep. Buck and other politicians who want to find middle ground on immigration can translate that desire into legislative action and not get lost in political limbo with the typical, partisan rhetoric.

Buck has the opportunity to lead on immigration reform and I applaud him and any legislator from either side of the political aisle who wants to ensure just, common-sense immigration reform that will benefit both immigrants and native-born citizens.

Abraham Torres, *Greeley*

This letter was published in the Jan. 13 edition.

FOX NEWS LATINO (Rodriguez Op-Ed): Pro Life, Pro Immigrant

By Rev. Rev. Samuel Rodriguez

January 28, 2015

<http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/opinion/2015/01/28/opinion-pro-life-pro-immigrant/>

It has been a discouraging week for evangelical Christians and others who are steadfastly devoted to protecting unborn life.

Last Thursday, as I joined with approximately 100,000 others at the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., the ostensibly pro-life Republican leadership of the House of Representatives called off a scheduled vote on the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Act. This legislation, which would prohibit abortions of unborn children past 20 weeks in their gestation in most cases, is a matter of conscience. Scientists believe that unborn children at 20 weeks are sufficiently developed so as to feel pain while abortion terminates their life. That's why most Americans, both women and men—including many who support the right to choose an abortion earlier in a pregnancy—support this bill. But in an apparent betrayal of the many pro-life evangelical and Catholic voters who just helped their party to gain control of both chambers of Congress, Republican leaders in the House decided against even offering a vote on the legislation.

Christian engagement in public policy is driven by the fundamental biblical conviction that all human life is made in the image of God and is thus to be cherished. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, legal status, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, disability, or any other qualifier, human life is sacred, and our faith requires us to advocate in particular for those who cannot speak up for themselves. Children still within their mothers' wombs certainly meet that definition.

That's why Christians—including the vast majority of Latino evangelicals represented by the tens of thousands of local churches within our nation who form the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference—are so adamantly pro-life. In fact, a recent poll finds that Hispanic immigrant evangelicals are among the most pro-life constituency in the nation: fully 73% oppose abortion in all or most cases, compared to 43% of the general population and 65% of our white evangelical brethren.

Latino evangelicals feel betrayed by the House Republicans' failure to vote on this basic legislation. Unfortunately, such betrayal seems to be becoming a trend.

Just two weeks ago, after assuring evangelical leaders both privately and publicly for more than a year that they were committed to finally reforming our antiquated immigration laws as we have urged them to do, House Republicans leadership pushed forward a bill to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which since 2012 has allowed certain individuals who were brought into the U.S. as children, not of their own volition, to be granted temporary work authorization and be relieved of the fear of deportation. That administrative policy has meant hope for tens of thousands of ambitious young people within Hispanic evangelical churches. The House's effort to remove these young people's work authorization and put them at risk of deportation is an offense to most Latino evangelicals (and to many other evangelical Christians as well).

It also should be deeply troublesome to all who support the pro-life cause, because the vote to end DACA—and the failure to advance the commonsense immigration reforms that are popular with most Americans as well as most evangelical Christians—is political suicide, setting up a scenario where it becomes nearly impossible for a pro-life president to be elected in 2016. That's because it is nearly impossible for a pro-life Republican presidential candidate to win the Electoral College without improving their standing among Latino voters from the paltry 27% that Governor Romney received in 2012, after vowing to dismantle the DACA program if elected and endorsing an immigration policy of "self-deportation." Latinos—and particularly Latino evangelicals—are eager to vote for a pro-life, pro-immigrant candidate in 2016, but the GOP's recent actions in the House of Representatives convey to Latino voters that it is uninterested in either label.

It's not too late though. Congressional Republicans should quickly take up both the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Act and a series of immigration bills that would secure our borders, reform our dysfunctional visa system, and establish a process by which immigrants present unlawfully could earn permanent legal status and eventual citizenship if they're willing to pay a fine, pass a criminal background check, and work over the course of several years for those privileges.

If they fail to do so, Latino evangelicals, for whom the pro-life cause and immigration reform are two key policy concerns, will take note. As was the case in 2012, when a majority supported President Obama's re-election, most will likely vote for Democratic candidates whom they trust will act on at least one of their key priorities.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Rodriguez is the President and CEO of NHCLC/Conela, which includes 40,118 Hispanic evangelical churches in the United States and serves more than 500,000 churches around the world.

Also ran:

CHRISTIAN POST

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/pro-life-pro-immigrant-133234/>

THE LEONARD E. GREENBERG CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE AT TRINITY COLLEGE (Walsh Post): Evangelicals Wimp Out on Immigration

By Andrew Walsh

December 19, 2014

<https://commons.trincoll.edu/religioninthenews/2014/12/19/evangelicals-wimp-out-on-immigration/>

In the early months of this year, tens of thousands of unaccompanied Central American children poured over the U.S. border, creating a new crisis in the ongoing and polarized debate over immigration reform. The flood of children also brought a broad and growing coalition of evangelical Protestants to a new and surprising place: the brink of a confrontation with the

GOP-dominated U.S. House of Representatives, which during the summer declined to act on immigration law or to increase spending to care for the children crossing the border.

In 2013, a newly visible evangelical coalition had given broad support and political cover to Senate Republicans, who eventually joined the Senate's Democratic majority in a bipartisan immigration reform bill that proposed to open a path to legal status for many of the nation's 11 million undocumented or illegal aliens, while increasing spending on border security.

In the wake of the Senate's action, Rev. Bill Hybels, pastor of the 12,000-member Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago and a leader in the movement for immigration reform, told the *Atlantic's* Michael Wear that he "had a message" for the House of Representatives: "If the House reneges, or decides to delay putting good legislation together, the frustration level (of evangelicals) will go over the top. There is a consensus that we need a new plan. The Senate was responsive to that; I have to hope that the house will do the right thing."

Wear's July 18, 2013 article carried the headline, "Is Immigration Reform Dead? Not if Evangelicals Can Do Anything About It."

A year of intense lobbying followed, but in the end evangelicals could not move House Republicans or bring themselves to publicly denounce the House GOP's refusal to act. The day may come when, in Wear's words, evangelicals will feel comfortable "aligned with Democrats and prodding Republicans to do what they think is the right—and moral—thing." But it has not arrived yet.

Over the past three decades there have been few political alignments stronger than that of white evangelicals and the GOP. Over that period, roughly 80 percent of evangelicals have voted Republican in presidential elections, constituting about 40 percent of the party's voter base. And suspicion of immigration is embedded deeply in the Republican Party's genes, dating to its origins in the 1850s.

Nevertheless, the children on the border heightened the sense of crisis over the summer. Michael Paulson of the *New York Times* noted on July 21 that the nation's Roman Catholic bishops and many of its most prominent evangelical leaders were "among the most agitated" about the nation's failure to do more to aid children fleeing violence and poverty in Central America.

"This is a crisis, and not simply a political crisis, but a moral one," Paulson quoted Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, who was visiting refugee children at detention centers in San Antonio and McAllen, Texas. Moore called "the anger directed toward vulnerable children" by opponents of immigration reform "deplorable and disgusting," adding, "The first thing is to make sure we understand these are not issues, these are persons. These children are made in the image of God, and we ought to respond to them with compassion, not with fear."

The emergence of Moore—the Southern Baptists' top public policy spokesman since March—as a vigorous public proponent of a path to citizenship for undocumented aliens coincided with the public emergence of the evangelical pro-immigration reform movement. The compulsively quotable Moore also attracted attention from journalists because he admitted that many of the most resolute opponents of immigration reform are themselves evangelicals.

"The Christian response to immigration in the United States cannot be 'You kids get off my lawn,' in Spanish," he wrote in a blog post on russellmoore.com on June 17, 2011. "I'm amazed when I hear evangelical Christians speak of undocumented immigrants in this country with disdain as 'those people' who are 'draining our health care and welfare resources.' It's horrifying to hear those identified with the gospel speak, whatever their position on the issues, with mean-spirited disdain for the immigrants themselves."

Before the mid-2000s, little was heard from white evangelicals about immigration reform. Latino evangelicals, for example, got scant support when they tried to rally evangelical support for an earlier attempt at immigration reform in 2006.

“I remember when my fellow evangelicals said, ‘Deport them all, they’re here illegally, end of story,’ but the leadership now supports immigration reform,” the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, told Michael Paulson of the *Times*. “There’s still angst in the pews, but if they listen more to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John than to Rush Limbaugh, they’ll act with compassion toward these children.”

Evangelical hostility to immigrants and immigration reform began to change for a variety of internal reasons. In the early 2000s, many megachurches began to open Spanish language mission operations. At Willow Creek that began with outreach to Chicago area Hispanics in 2002.

Over the last several decades, American evangelicalism has seen much of its growth come from immigrant populations—Koreans and other Asians, Central and South Americans, Africans, and others. And that is changing the self-image of American evangelicalism which now has a pronounced global flavor. While many immigrants belong to religious communities focused on their own language and cultures, it is now quite common for immigrants to join what were once virtually all-white congregations. As with the nation’s Roman Catholic leadership, demographic change has inclined more evangelical leaders to think of immigrants as part of an “us,” rather than as a “them.”

Measurable change began in the upper reaches of the evangelical world in 2007, when the Rev. Leith Anderson, a Minnesota megachurch pastor, announced that he wanted to make immigration reform a key policy priority during his term as president of the National Associations of Evangelicals, the largest umbrella organization in the sprawling evangelical organizational world.

In 2009, the NAE produced a “consensus statement” supporting comprehensive immigration reform that would lead to citizenship for many undocumented immigrants—a stance not shared by most Republicans. The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest American Protestant denomination, followed suit with a call for “path to citizenship” in 2011.

The shifting mood also registered in local congregations. “Immigrants are really changing the face of the religious landscape of the United States,” the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America (itself the product of 19th-century immigration from Europe), told Lourdes Medrano of the *Christian Science Monitor* on April 29. Granberg-Michaelson herself had just published *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church*, a book arguing that immigrants are the future of American Christianity. One example of the new reality cited by Granberg-Michaelson is a Columbus megachurch with 9,000 members, 28 percent of whom are immigrants and refugees from 104 nations.

Julia Preston of the *New York Times* interviewed a large number of white evangelicals in Florida for a piece published on April 13. In it, many church members said their views on immigration had changed significantly as a result of personal contact with immigrants who now worship in their congregations.

As they met the immigrants, the white evangelicals learned about their struggles with the legal system, including the devastation caused by deportations that often divide families. (There have 2 million deportations in the Obama years.) In many immigrant families, some members are legal immigrants or citizens and others are not, so even legal immigrants often live in fear of immigration enforcement officers.

Preston quoted Steward Hall, a 70-year-old member of First Baptist Church in Orlando, whose perspective on immigration began to shift when he moved “to sit in the pews at the rear of the church where immigrants new to the congregation choose” to worship. “Take me back 10 years ago,” Hall said, “and I had this really hard shell about it. Line ‘em up and shoot ‘em, and by that I really mean pack them up and get them out of here.” But, he added, personal acquaintance with immigrants and their families, and “my walk with Christ” had softened his views.

In the first decade of the 21st century, most discussions about immigration and immigrants took place out of mainstream view, within the relatively sheltered world of evangelical organizations, media, and conferences. An important turning point was marked by publication of *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate*, a volume published in 2009 by Mathews Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, both employees of World Relief, a development arm of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Soerens and Yang crisscrossed the country, building support for immigration reform that opened a path to citizenship and creating new political networks. At the heart of their message was an insistence on the dignity and worth of immigrants and the powerful reassertion of Jesus' instruction to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew that "whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me." Soerens became famous in evangelical circles for noting that the Old Testament contains the Hebrew word *ger* (stranger) no fewer than 92 times. It's worth emphasizing that this activism originated in a part of the evangelical world that supports global mission work.

By 2010, evangelical participation in the Immigration March on Washington was noticeable to outsiders and a groundswell of support for immigration reform was shaping opinion at many of the nation's evangelical colleges and universities. In 2011, a national student conference at Cedarville University in Ohio, endorsed broadly by evangelical organizations and leaders, produced the G92 Fellowship, a grassroots organization whose website (G92.org) promotes the establishment of local student groups. It also disseminates a host of material designed to allay popular concerns that illegal immigration is bad for the economy, promotes law breaking and law breakers, and that immigrants, especially Spanish speakers, refuse to learn English.

In 2012, a group of much more senior leaders launched the Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT), which brought together a host of conservative and moderate evangelical figures and organizations. It included Richard Land, then still the president of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, who had been on record in support of immigration reform since the 1990s. Contributing one of the evangelical world's most striking assertions about the contradictions in the nation's immigration policy, he frequently observed that at every border crossing there are two signs, one saying "No Trespassing" and the other "Help Wanted."

A measure of the new cause's popularity was that the very socially conservative Focus on the Family organization rushed to join in the last hours before the group was publicly announced. The most prominent evangelical complaint about current immigration law is that enforcement often shatters family life—dividing spouses, parents and children from one another.

The rise of EIT and organizations like it triggered an intense discussion in the media during the 2012 presidential campaign year about whether new "values positions" among younger evangelicals on immigration and environmentalism might lead to political realignment.

Although that never materialized, in 2013, the EIT and other groups did amp up their campaign for new immigration laws in the context of a second Obama administration. This provoked a strong counter-reaction both inside the Republican Party and among evangelicals not behind the pro-reform program—hardly a surprise in the complex, feisty, and disputatious world of American evangelicalism.

Marjorie Jeffrey of the Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD), a conservative culture warrior over the politics of Christian social justice, weighed in with a blog post on June 5, suggesting that the EIT's evangelical bigwigs were dupes of plutocrat George Soros and his leftist National Immigration Forum.

Noting with alarm that the EIT was "composed of a surprisingly large list of notables from evangelical organizations, presidents of universities, and officials of denominations," she wrote that she was relieved to discover that most polls indicated that evangelical voters did not want immigration reform along the lines advocated by the EIT. She called the group's "I was a Stranger" campaign on college campuses a "truly masterful piece of emotional blackmail."

“But there remains the nauseating fact that some Evangelicals are peddling a new sort of liberation theology to American Christians, aided by a man (Soros) who has actively supported and financed organizations that directly go against Evangelical beliefs about marriage, abortion, euthanasia and embryonic stem cell research,” she wrote.

In response, the Washington-based IRD and other committed conservatives fostered the development of a group to challenge the EIT, called Evangelicals for Biblical Immigration (EBI), which hewed to an anti-Obama line. Its founding manifesto in June 2013 attempted to refute of the EIT’s brief for a biblical mandate for immigration reform.

“We ask you to consider the whole of Scripture, and the rights of *all* people whose lives matter to God, including Americans,” declared the statement, which was signed by a few evangelical worthies. “The whole counsel of Scripture calls for both justice to citizens as well as kindness to guests. Given the fact that more than twenty million Americans are unemployed, and thousands of small businesses have died under this administration, the majority of American citizens (70% on average of polls) do not desire an influx of foreign labor.”

EBI exhorted evangelicals to “consider the whole of Scripture” at least partly because most explicit Biblical discussion about immigrants and the poor, in both testaments of the Bible, are so unequivocal in demanding hospitality and unconditional support for the poor and immigrant. Inside the evangelical thought world, the discussion of immigration reform typically oscillates between two Biblical traditions: demands for hospitality, fair-dealing, and support for immigrants one the one hand, and, on the other, a respect for law and legitimate authority that is usually grounded in Chapter 13 of the Apostle Paul’s Letter to the Romans. Romans 13 begins, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.”

Those who counterpose Romans 13 to the raft of Biblical exhortations to help the poor and the stranger tend to begin their analysis by arguing that undocumented immigrants are law breakers who can’t be assisted without undermining the rule of law. And, as with EBI, the next step is usually to emphasize that citizens of the United States must also be treated justly and protected from unfair competition.

Of course, the leaders of the Evangelical Immigration Table are well aware of Romans 13 and much of the material produced by the group addresses that text and tradition. A video featuring Richard Land’s handling of the interpretive problem is on the group’s home page.

Land reviews the Biblical mandates to care for the poor and immigrant and treats them as irresistible gospel imperatives. He then moves to speak respectfully of Romans 13 and then says that he and others want a new immigration law that deals forthrightly with the fact that current law is irreparably broken.

What they don’t want, he said, is amnesty. A better law would secure American borders, take measures that make it impossible for illegal immigrants to get jobs and for employers to hire them, ensure that immigrants all learn to speak English rapidly and ensure that law-abiding immigrants have a chance to gain citizenship after paying some meaningful penalty for breaking American law.

Hundreds of prominent evangelical pastors, mustered by EIT, descended on Washington in April 2013 to lobby House GOP members. And during the summer and fall of that year, EIT, G92, and other pro-immigrant evangelicals worked hard to persuade House Republicans to act on a bill comparable to the one passed by the Senate and endorsed by the Obama administration. They adopted vigorous mobilizing campaigns, including “Pray for Reform,” a million dollar radio advertising campaign focused on congressional districts with Republicans incumbents for two weeks in August in states like Texas, Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Ohio. “Right now, members of Congress are home for the August recess, listening to what their constituents want for the rest of the year,” Barrett Duke of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission told Gary Martin of the *San Antonio Express-News* on August 21, 2013. “We support broad immigration reform without delay.”

Lobbying conservative Republicans hard for something that they didn't want to do was new and uncomfortable for many pro-immigration reform evangelicals. They wished that immigration reform had bipartisan appeal.

"It's been my experience that there have been individuals on both sides of the aisle who understand the need for comprehensive reform," Rev. Harvey Clemons, pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Houston, told Allan Turner of the *Houston Chronicle* on May 25. "This is not a Democratic problem or a Republican problem, it's a United States problem. The individuals who understand it and are willing to work on it are in the minority," he added gloomily.

The "Pray for Reform" campaign failed to move a significant number of House members, who listened to hometown pastors politely, but didn't change their positions. In the fall, hopes turned to persuading House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio, who favored at least some form of immigration reform, to lead an adequate number of Republicans to vote in favor of reform along with House Democrats.

But in December, Boehner made it clear that there would be no House action on immigration in 2013 and said he would not support a comprehensive bill in 2014. Instead, he would support a "common sense, step-by-step," approach, he told Roxana Kopetman of the *Orange County Register* in southern California on December 13.

In early 2013, some House Republicans floated the idea of immigration reform that gave undocumented aliens with no criminal records some form of a resident alien status rather than a path to citizenship. But neither House Republicans nor many evangelicals liked that approach either.

Most House Republicans paid attention instead to militantly mobilized and anti-reform Tea Party supporters. Additionally, they were reluctant to give the Obama administration any kind of political victory in a year when Republicans felt that the midterm elections would go their way in both the House and Senate.

In 2013 and 2014, pro-reform evangelicals were functionally allied with "establishment" Republicans (usually meaning Republicans who held high office during the Bush years) and with business leaders who wanted reform. Beginning soon after President Obama's re-election, establishment Republicans, personified by Karl Rove and Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus, warned without substantial immigration reform, Latino voters, the fastest growing sector of the electorate, might be permanently alienated from the party. And indeed, survey research showed that evangelical Protestants, the religious group least supportive of comprehensive immigration reform, growing somewhat more supportive of a path to citizenship after 2010. By the fall of 2013, the Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Poll was reporting that the percentage of evangelicals supporting a path to citizenship had crossed 50 percent for the first time. (By contrast, support among other large constituencies was much higher, with Roman Catholics and those with no religion reporting 75 percent support for a path to citizenship.)

But as the House of Representatives failed to act and some Republicans suggested a path to residency but not citizenship for undocumented aliens, the small evangelical majority for reform began to slip away in the early months of 2014. Most observers believed that highly mobilized Tea Party voters were behind the House's inaction—a perception heightened by House Majority Leader Eric Cantor's primary defeat by a Tea Party-backed, anti-immigration reform candidate in June.

While many journalists portrayed the Tea Party's constituency as libertarian, polling consistently showed Tea Party voters identifying far more with evangelical Protestantism than libertarianism. Surveys by Pew and the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI)/Brookings Institution have consistently shown that a bit more than 50 percent of Tea Party voters say they are evangelicals, but only about 20 percent describe themselves as libertarians.

“Republicans overall are more likely to be white than the general population and Tea Party Republicans are more likely than non-Tea Party establishment Republicans to be white, male, older and evangelical Protestant,” Robert P. Jones of PRRI wrote on June 12 on Atlantic.com. Jones argued that Eric Cantor’s defeat was more than a lesson for pro-reform Republicans. Rather, it opened “a window into what any accommodating legislation on immigration reform may signify for Tea Party Republicans: a surrender to the lengthening shadows in what was a bright, familiar cultural world.”

That cultural world was the overwhelming white majority society of the middle decades of the 20th century, when immigration was sharply restricted.

Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson, a former Bush administration figure, expressed concern about the implications of this nostalgia in a November 6 column that asked whether American evangelicals place more importance on their social identities than on their theological convictions. Citing Pew surveys, he noted that “more than 60 percent believe that the growing number of immigrants ‘threatens traditional American customs and values’ and more than half view immigrants as an economic burden rather than contributors.”

“It is often said that evangelicals are not monolithic on immigration,” Gerson wrote. “The reality is more troubling to the faithful, or should be. Their views on immigration are less a function of their religious beliefs than of their group identity.” Like other establishment Republicans, Gerson argued that the party’s future rests largely on expanding its base of voters to include socially conservatives Latinos, who won’t vote for an anti-immigration party.

Surveys by PRRI/Brookings added support this spring and summer to the thesis that Tea Partiers (who are mostly evangelical males) are implacably opposed to immigration reform. Writing in Atlantic.com August 8, Daniel Cox considered the refusal of House Republicans to hold a vote puzzling, “given America’s high level of support for comprehensive immigration reform.” Overall support for a path to citizenship reached 62 percent in July, with an even higher proportion backing action to assist unaccompanied children on the border.

Cox noted that PRRI’s latest survey showed that Tea Party voters “stand out in their opposition to any kind of amnesty for undocumented immigrants.” Only 37 percent of them favored a path to citizenship, while 23 percent favored a path for most immigrants to permanent resident status, but not citizenship. Another 37 percent, meanwhile, backed “a policy that would identify and deport all immigrants in the United States illegally, the highest among all partisan groups.” The Tea Party’s evangelical core “represents constituencies haunted by anxiety associated with the perception that they’re ‘losing the country’ to immigrants from south of the border,” Cox wrote, quoting University of Washington political scientist Christopher S. Parker.

In retrospect, the evangelical campaign in support of immigration reform and a path to citizenship probably peaked in April, with the congressional lobbying campaign of the EIT pastors. As the summer passed, evangelical pressure on House Republicans faded away. If evangelical supporters of immigration reform haven’t changed their minds, neither have they figured out how to persuade a significant mass of their co-religionists. The evangelical friends of immigration reform include many of the movement’s institutional leaders, a large share of younger evangelicals, and of course immigrant evangelicals.

Evangelical political preferences are already divided by race. Black and white evangelicals have completely opposite voting preferences. In the not too distant future, younger white evangelicals may break their allegiance to the Republican Party and move into a less-aligned place in association with the rapidly growing number of immigrant evangelicals.

Another possibility is that most white evangelicals will stay tightly bound to the Republican Party because they are most effectively mobilized by anxieties about the changing demography and culture of the United States.

Thomas Edsall of the *Washington Post* reported on May 21 that an increasing number of political scientists believe that strategies that raise consciousness about the nation’s changing demography may make it possible to mobilize white Republican voters effectively and even draw

in white voters not now aligned with the party. Edsall cited studies by two Northwestern University social scientists who recently presented survey data that show that “whites—whether they call themselves liberals, centrists, or conservatives—all moved to the right when exposed to information about the approaching minority status of whites in the United States.”

“Overall, making this racial shift salient could bring more moderate white Americans into the Republican Party, as well as increase turnout among white Americans who already consider themselves Republicans,” Maureen Craig told Edsall.

Under either scenario, the breakup of the white evangelical vote or the mobilization of whites around anti-immigrant, anti-minority politics, white evangelicals will have to deal with their now-evident internal divide between those who view immigration reform as a pressing and universal requirement of the gospel and those whose religious commitments are tempered by their politics and loyalty to an older vision of American identity.

Given the chasm that might well be opening before them, it is not altogether surprising that pro-immigration evangelicals fell silent in July as the House refused to act. But the circumstances that led so many of them to back reform—most of all the deportations that devastate families, including families in their congregations—aren’t going away.

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL (Turak Op-Ed): U.S. needs to face reality on immigration reform

By Jonathan Turak

January 24, 2015

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/us-needs-to-face-reality-on-immigration-reform-b99430403z1-289643001.html>

The fears shaping the immigration reform debate do not reflect its realities.

Michele Bachmann, the recently retired congresswoman from Minnesota, referred, in response to President Barack Obama's amnesty speech, to "millions of unskilled, illiterate, foreign nationals" ...who "can't speak the language." Her remark reflects the common belief that immigrants will take jobs, overwhelm social services, raise crime and lower our quality of life. The perception that immigration means linguistic division and a threat to our American image underlies the debate. We can only move beyond this with facts. Hard evidence shows that immigration does not lead to newcomers hurting our way of life, but rather helps us to rebuild our economy and enables everyone to live better.

Less than one in five immigrants lives in poverty — 19.1% as opposed to 15.4% of the native-born population, according to the Center for American Progress. Immigrants consistently use social programs such as Medicaid and Supplemental Security less than native-born households, the organization reports.

And immigrants overwhelmingly take jobs native-born workers refuse. According to Olsen Public Relations, this improves the productivity of America workers. The Department of Agriculture states that each farm worker creates three more jobs in less labor-intensive sectors such as feed, food processing, manufacturing of agricultural equipment and pharmaceuticals, packaging, marketing and transport. Rather than taking American jobs, hiring immigrants helps to *create* more jobs for Americans.

Nationwide, the lack of a stable workforce poses a challenge to the dairy industry and to our agriculture in general, as too few Americans take these jobs. According to the Green Bay Press Gazette and TwinCities.com, 40% of workers in Wisconsin's \$26 billion dairy industry, 45% of workers in Minnesota's \$11.5 billion dairy industry, and 41% of dairy workers nationwide are immigrants. The same holds true for other agricultural sectors as well as food processing, landscaping, hospitality, caregiving, waste management and construction. Denying economic realities will not lead to a productive result.

What doesn't work

The Press Gazette notes that current law allows no legal way for less-skilled foreign workers without family here to enter the U.S. for full-time jobs, and that without them, those industries cannot expand. Americans simply do not take these positions, as they are too physically demanding, the wages are too low and they perceive them as lacking both status and a future. In 2011, the state of Georgia tried what the critics of immigration wanted to see, and it failed. Georgia passed an extremely restrictive immigration law, chasing undocumented immigrants out of the state. Georgia agriculture lost 40% of its work force. Not enough Americans took the work, with even people on probation walking off the fields before the end of their first day. One hundred forty million dollars of produce rotted in the fields. Alabama had a similar experience. "Cracking down" on companies that do not check the legal status of their workers damages the economy.

The numbers reveal the reality. Normalizing the status of undocumented immigrants would expand the economy. Naturalized workers would earn higher wages, pay higher taxes and purchase more goods and services, thus creating economic growth. If legal status were granted today, and citizenship within five years, the 10-year cumulative increases in gross domestic product would be \$1.1 trillion, the Center for American Progress reports. This would add an average of 159,000 new jobs a year and new tax revenue of \$144 billion over 10 years, increasing the earnings of all American workers by \$618 billion over the decade. This also translates into \$6.1 billion in payroll tax revenue in the first year, increasing to \$45 billion over the next five years.

According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, passing such legislation would reduce the budget deficit by \$135 billion after the first decade and \$685 billion in the second. If documented, immigrants would contribute \$606.4 billion to Social Security over the next 36 years as the baby boomers pass from the scene, thus supporting 2.4 million retirees and relieving a strained system. Further, more than two-thirds of the new entrants will replace retiring workers. The U.S. needs 58.6 million workers but only 51.3 million native-born people are projected to fill these spots. Newly naturalized immigrants can fill the gap.

None of this takes into account the new trade ties, innovations and increases in demand that accompany immigration.

Adam Minter, in Junkyard Planet, notes how Chinese American immigrants have created a billion-dollar industry shipping U.S. scrap to China on otherwise empty vessels for recycling, while the Competitive Enterprise Institute quotes Say's Law of economics, stating that the income generated by an immigrant will generate demand elsewhere in the economy.

Contrast this with the \$37 million of missed tax revenue daily because undocumented immigrants are not paid as much or not on the tax rolls. As of October, the House of Representative's inaction on immigration reform has cost the United States \$17.7 billion in lost revenue. Unauthorized workers pay \$12 billion per year in payroll taxes. If they were authorized, this would increase to \$20 billion — money that could fund the baby boomers' retirement.

Leaders in 'family values'

Bachmann, the former member of Congress, has said that undocumented immigrants are at war with the United States. Let's note first that 20% of all Medal of Honor recipients are immigrants. According to the Department of Defense, 65,000 immigrants — both naturalized and non-U.S. citizens — comprise 5% of our active duty force.

Nine percent of all living U.S. veterans have at least one immigrant parent, while veterans who are immigrants or children of immigrants comprise 12% all veterans. Our military, in the age of asymmetrical warfare in far-off lands, needs and values their unique linguistic, regional and cultural skills. Immigrants in the military have a lower attrition rate — only 4% of non-citizens drop out vs. 8.2% of the native-born population after three months, and 18.2% vs. 31.9% after 48 months. Non-citizens have half the drop-out level of U.S.-born volunteers. Since they make up 4% percent of all first-time recruits, this means significant savings.

Regarding family values and religion, the Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project tells us that 61% of legal immigrants are Christian, while 83% of undocumented immigrants are Christian — in contrast to 80% of the U.S. population as a whole that calls itself Christian. Fifty-six percent of immigrants come from Latin America; of these, 68% are Roman Catholic, 15% evangelical Protestant.

They work hard. The median annual income of second-generation immigrant children in 2012, according to the Center for American Progress, is \$58,100 — only \$100 shy of the national average. This shows a significantly higher average than the \$45,800 median annual income of their parents. Normally, within 10 years, 70% of immigrants are at or above the level they had in their native country. In truth, we generally get the lower middle classes — not the underclass poor — so we receive a population with skills and a work ethic.

Critics such as Bachman worry about illiteracy. More data from the center shows that in 2012, 11.6% of immigrants had graduate degrees vs. 10.4% of the native-born population; the same year 69.4% of the foreign-born population had a high school diploma or higher, compared with 89.9% of the native-born population.

And immigrants are absorbing English at the same rate as all other groups have — we just don't remember our cities a century ago, with their Italian, German, Polish, Yiddish and Greek newspapers. The unspoken issue remains the change in ethnic demographics and the accompanying fears it brings. Look back again a century or two. Remember how the Irish, the Italians, the Poles and the Greeks were disdained and feared? One of my Ukrainian uncles, in the 1920s, was beat up by the Ku Klux Klan for being an immigrant and a Catholic (he was actually Russian Orthodox, but they didn't know the difference). Two of my Minnesota aunts swore, 80 years ago, that they would never marry Swedes (they did, and I have a bunch of wonderful cousins because of it).

As Americans, we know about bigotry. Let's look at facts instead.

Remember the GI Bill? It helped to create the post-war American middle class. Passing of the Dream Act would immediately create 1 million jobs, while generating over the next 20 years at least \$329 billion and 1.4 million jobs. This is cheaper than building prisons.

This population is overwhelmingly law-abiding. A 2007 study by Immigration Policy Center showed that immigrant men between the ages of 18 and 39 had a 0.7% incarceration rate, vs. 3.5% for native-born men of the same group. From 1990-2010, the foreign-born share of the U.S. population grew from 8% to 13%, while violent crime in this period fell by 45%, and property crime by 42%. According to the Transitional Records Access Clearinghouse, 55.6% federal convictions in 2014 were immigration-related; that is, the government is criminalizing otherwise ordinary people. The most serious convictions of the majority of immigrants are either immigration or traffic violations.

The cost of securing the border

What about our borders?

Walls do not work. Hadrian's Wall, the Great Wall of China, the Maginot Line and the Berlin Wall all failed. Demand for the world's most precious commodity — human capital — drives the rush at the border. The U.S. currently spends more on border enforcement — \$18 billion — than the annual GDP of 80 countries.

By 2008, the cost of deporting a single individual — in apprehension, detention, processing and transporting — reached \$23,482. It breaks apart families, leading to bigger social problems later. Forced deportation — including both border and internal efforts — would cost \$285 billion over five years. This amount would pay 1 million public high school teachers for five years. Self-deportation, meanwhile, would lower GDP by \$2.6 trillion over the decade.

The amount of treasure and effort expended on essentially innocent people sounds suspiciously like the big government no one wants.

Bachmann wants to confiscate 100% of the remittances sent home by immigrants. Ironically, this money has proven effective in developing these countries into capitalist economies. It tends

to be invested in businesses, developing the stability and prosperity that will eventually keep populations from needing to leave, and will thus help keep our borders secure. We need to protect our borders. But we will have an easier time if we have an appropriate and intelligent legal structure that anticipates the demand for labor. We can then concentrate on genuine dangers rather than on the hard working people that our economy needs. Reform would give us a payback of hundreds of billion of dollars in reduced deficit and in economic growth. We need to examine facts, rather than emotional arguments, in order both to protect our borders and to support our economic growth. We need a rational discussion and the political will to take the right actions.

Jonathan Turak is a retired foreign service officer and free-lance writer based in Washington, D.C.

SIOUX CITY JOURNAL: Church News

January 23, 2015

http://siouxcityjournal.com/lifestyles/faith-and-values/church-news/article_d1a6c4f7-e81d-5339-820c-d69a77af0732.html

Northwestern hosts speaker

Matthew Soerens, a Christian leader who assists churches in understanding immigration from a biblical perspective, will speak in **Northwestern College's chapel service** at 10:05 a.m. Monday and 11:05 a.m. Tuesday. The events are free and open to the public. Soerens serves as the field director for the Evangelical Immigration Table, a coalition of national evangelical organizations advocating for immigration reform consistent with Christian values. [...]

SIOUX CITY JOURNAL: Immigration reform talk planned in Orange City

January 23, 2015

http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/local/education/immigration-reform-talk-planned-in-orange-city/article_019b232e-9a08-5d78-aef6-b1a4940c29c6.html

ORANGE CITY, Iowa | Christian author Matthew Soerens will speak about immigration reform Monday and Tuesday at Northwestern College.

Soerens will moderate a discussion at 9 p.m. Monday following a showing of "The Stranger" in the Vogel Community Room of the DeWitt Learning Commons, 101 7th St. SW.

Tuesday events include a breakfast, presentation and book signing at noon.

The event is sponsored by CASA of Sioux County.

For more information, call 712-266-3229 or visit nwciowa.edu.

SIOUX CITY JOURNAL: In advance of Steve King event, group pushes path to citizenship

By Bret Hayworth

January 22, 2015

http://siouxcityjournal.com/blogs/politically_speaking/hayworth-in-advance-of-steve-king-event-group-pushes-path/article_2eb44be8-a65e-55f9-be6d-a64f7d494171.html

A Northwest Iowa group is among those telling Republicans who will attend a high-profile Saturday political forum that Iowans want immigration reform.

The Center for Assistance, Service and Advocacy of Sioux County published a newspaper advertisement Thursday. [The ad](#) cites a [Feb. 2013 poll](#) that showed 77 percent of Iowans favor allowing immigrants who are in the country illegally to have a path to citizenship.

The headline of the ad addresses "2016 presidential candidates coming to Iowa." A related press release notes that a big gathering of possible presidential candidates will occur Saturday, at the Iowa Freedom [Summit hosted by U.S. Rep. Steve King](#).

King is well-known as a vocal critic of a pathway to citizenship for undocumented residents. He has pushed back against a June 2013 Senate bill that included that piece.

King's event in Des Moines is the first big candidate cattle call of the year. The Iowa caucuses are one year off. Participants include such Republicans as New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum and Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker.

[CASA Sioux County](#) oversaw raising money for the ad, to which many Iowa organizations donated. The list includes many people from Orange City and Sioux Center.

CASA spokesman Harold Heie, of Orange City, said, "Iowans from across the state are joining together to set the record straight on immigration. The majority of Iowans support immigration reform and we want 2016 candidates, both Republicans and Democrats, to take notice."

There will be more next week related to immigration in Sioux County. A Christian author who writes about immigration reform will hold Monday and Tuesday events in Orange City. The first of the Matthew Soerens events will be held Monday evening at Northwestern College.

[Soerens wrote](#) the book "Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate."

CASA board member Ed Rodriguez said, "What Matt brings into the discussion around immigration is a Kingdom perspective. When people discuss immigration what is often left out is God's love and mercy."

UNIVISION SAN DIEGO: Grupo intercultural explora relaciones raciales en Denver

KBNT News

01/14/2015 1:58 PM

<http://www.univisionsandiego.com/2015/01/14/grupo-intercultural-explora-relaciones-raciales-en-denver/>

Denver (CO), 14 ene (EFEUSA).- Las relaciones raciales en Denver, donde casi la mitad de los residentes no son blancos, mejorarán sólo cuando se supere la indiferencia y las incongruencias sociales que ahora impiden un auténtico diálogo sobre el tema, indicó hoy a Efe un experto local en ciencias sociales y en políticas públicas.

"Cuando las autoridades y las fuerzas de seguridad están desconectadas de la población de color surgen tensiones sociales. Y si no se actúa inmediatamente, esas tensiones pueden transformarse en un tsunami social, como recientemente lo vimos en otras ciudades", aseveró Ramón del Castillo, profesor de la Universidad Estatal Metropolitana de Denver.

Del Castillo moderó esta mañana una "conversación comunitaria", llamada "Carrera Contra el Racismo", en la que participaron casi cien representantes de organizaciones comunitarias, educativas y religiosas locales, incluyendo latinos, afroamericanos y blancos.

"Decimos que somos una sociedad ciega a los colores, pero no lo somos, ya que estamos continuamente conscientes de la raza de las personas", advirtió el catedrático.

Esa situación crea fricciones que "pueden llevar a un aumento del racismo y del odio social", detalló.

Estadísticas del censo indican que en Denver viven unas 650.000 personas, de las cuales el 54 por ciento son blancos, el 31 por ciento latinos, el 10 por ciento afroamericanos, el 4 por ciento asiáticos y el resto nativos o de otras razas. Sin embargo, ni el Departamento de Policía ni la Oficina del alguacil de Denver reflejan esa diversidad.

Del Castillo y otros expertos coincidieron que esa "desconexión" es una de las razones por los incidentes de posible uso excesivo de fuerza ocurridos en Denver en 2014, pero aseguraron que existen otras razones.

"Los latinos seguimos siendo una minoría invisible, quizá la más invisible de todas con excepción de nuestros hermanos y hermanas nativos americanos", dijo Del Castillo.

“Eso crea una incongruencia entre lo que la policía dice sobre los latinos y lo que la policía hace con los latinos”, agregó.

La respuesta, opinó Del Castillo, debe surgir de un diálogo “que reconozca que los jóvenes de hoy están más interesados en sacrificarse para resolver problemas sociales que en rebelarse contra sus padres”.

Por su parte, Michelle Warren (blanca), coordinadora de la Mesa Evangélica de Inmigración en Colorado, sostuvo que el racismo y la discriminación se extienden más allá de la apariencia física o la nacionalidad de una persona e incluyen también la situación inmigratoria.

“Existe un imperativo moral para aprobar una reforma inmigratoria y una clara enseñanza bíblica de darle la bienvenida al extranjero”, dijo Warren.

Pero para H. Malcolm Newton, presidente del Instituto de Estudios Urbanos de Denver, la apelación a los principios cristianos no siempre resulta adecuada porque “lamentablemente hemos aceptado una forma de cristianismo que nos permite ser cristianos y racistas”.

FEBRUARY:

ARKANSAS BAPTIST: Podcast with SBC President Ronnie Floyd

<http://www.arkansasbaptist.org/storage/ABNPodcast36.mp3>

THE ATLANTIC: What Americans Actually Think About Immigration

By Robert P. Jones

Feb 25, 2015

http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/02/what-americans-actually-think-about-immigration/386036/?single_page=true&print=

On immigration reform, rhetoric has often been out of sync with public opinion. Despite roughly three-quarters of Americans supporting the goals behind President Obama’s executive action on immigration, Obama’s new immigration plan has run into repeated Republican roadblocks.

Republican governors in 26 states are suing the Obama administration, claiming that the order exceeded Obama’s authority. A Republican-appointed judge in Texas ruled in favor of the GOP governors and issued an injunction halting the policy’s implementation. Republican congressional leaders are pursuing a parallel track to block the implementation of the executive action. GOP lawmakers have set up a partisan showdown by attaching riders to the Department of Homeland Security funding bill that would defund Obama’s executive action on immigration. That bill, or a continuing resolution, must pass this week in order for DHS to remain open.

Today, the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) released the American Values Atlas, an online interactive map that provides an unprecedented portrait of America’s changing religious and political landscape. The AVA was designed to harness the power of big data—more than 40,000 telephone interviews—in order to provide a lens for understanding public opinion at levels not typically possible—such as at the state and metro level—or among smaller subgroups of Americans whose voices cannot be discerned in typical surveys. The AVA includes two measures in the area of immigration, one focused on policy, and the other on how immigrants are perceived. And the results are revealing.

At the national level, the AVA finds solid support for a path to citizenship. When asked to identify the best approach for dealing with immigrants who are living in the country illegally, six in 10 Americans say there should be a way for such immigrants to become citizens provided they meet certain requirements, while 17 percent say they should be allowed to become permanent legal residents but not citizens, and 19 percent say they should be identified and deported.

Similarly, Americans hold fairly positive assessments of the economic impact of immigrants, with 55 percent saying that immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents, while only 36 percent say that immigrants are a burden on the country because they take jobs, housing, and healthcare.

A quick look at the AVA state map reveals that there is a broad consensus across the country about immigration policy solutions. For example, majorities of the residents of all 50 states support a path to citizenship for qualified immigrants currently living in the U.S. illegally. Support for a path to citizenship is fairly consistent across states, ranging from almost two-thirds in Delaware, Kansas, and Vermont, to just over half in Louisiana and Wyoming. There is a broader span of opinion across states regarding the economic impact of immigrants. At one end, 52 percent of West Virginians and Mississippians say immigrants are a burden because they take jobs, housing, and health care. At the other end, only 26 percent of California residents say immigrants are a burden on the country—while two-thirds of state residents report that immigrants strengthen the U.S. because of their hard work and talents. A couple of key patterns are evident here. First, it is notable that there are only 5 states—West Virginia, Mississippi, Wyoming, Maine, and Alabama—in which half or more of residents say immigrants are a burden on the country. Second, generally speaking, the states that tend to hold the most negative judgments about the economic impact of immigrants are not states that have historically had high levels of immigration. The reverse is also true. The four states in which residents hold the least concerns about immigrants being a burden are California, Hawaii, New Jersey, and New York—the historic centers of immigration in the country. Because of the AVA’s large sample size, users are able to look at attitudes of demographic subgroups with an unprecedented degree of confidence. For example, the AVA demonstrates that the consensus across states on a path to citizenship largely holds across subgroups, including conservative subgroups. Majorities of Republicans (52 percent), white evangelical Protestants (54 percent), seniors (56 percent), and non-Hispanic whites (59 percent) all support a path to citizenship for immigrants currently living in the country illegally. Those numbers are based on interviews among random samples of over 9,400 Republicans, 7,900 white evangelical Protestants, 11,500 seniors, and 27,700 non-Hispanic white Americans. This broad level of support is not always reflected in the polarized political debate, but not because of state-level differences. Residents of the 26 states bringing legal action against the Obama administration are only slightly more likely than average to say that immigrants are a burden on the country (39 percent vs. 36 percent respectively), and their support for a path to citizenship, at 59 percent, is statistically indistinguishable from the national average. These 26 states are set apart less by the views of their residents than the actions of their governors. The pioneers of modern public opinion polling understood their craft as providing a vital democratic function in an increasingly fast-paced world. George Gallup promised that surveys would “allow the American people to speak for themselves,” and Elmo Roper referred to scientific surveys as “democracy’s auxiliary ballot box.” The immigration debate is a clear example of a terrain on which the pitched partisan battles waged by politicians have obscured the broad agreements of their constituents. If the public opinion data from the AVA can serve to remind our leaders—and even ourselves—that there is common ground available on an important issue like immigration, it has come close to realizing some of its civic and civilizing potential.

THE ATLANTIC (Jones Op-Ed): Even Republicans Love Obama's Immigration Policies

GOP voters support the executive actions in principal, but oppose them once they're linked to the president.

By Robert P. Jones

February 12, 2015

http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/02/republicans-love-obamas-immigration-policies-until-they-find-out-theyre-his/385451/?single_page=true&print

At first glance, the battle over immigration reform seems like nothing new—just one more example of partisan gridlock. But new research from Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI)

shows that President Obama's actions on immigration are broadly popular, particularly when they are not identified with him. The survey also shows why GOP strategists would do well to advise against a partisan showdown on this terrain. By catering to their most conservative voters, congressional Republicans risk not only opposing policies supported by the mainstream of their own party but also undermining efforts to reach out to the growing number of Hispanic voters who will be key to successes in 2016 and beyond.

On February 18, President Obama's executive action expanding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program will go into effect. One of its central provisions will allow immigrants living in the country illegally, but who are the parents of children with legal status, to remain in the United States. They can stay for up to three years, if they pass a background check and have been in the country for at least five years. Obama took this action after bipartisan, comprehensive immigration-reform legislation passed in the Senate but repeatedly stalled in the House of Representatives.

It is truly remarkable that an issue like immigration reform, which enjoys [such broad support](#) among the public, has become so mired in politics. PRRI's most [recent survey](#)—released this week—finds that roughly three-quarters (76 percent) of Americans support the specifics of Obama's executive action allowing the parents of children with legal status to stay in the country for up to three years if they meet certain requirements. Just one in five Americans (19 percent) is opposed to this policy. Moreover, this policy enjoys strong majority support across partisan and religious lines. 87 percent of Democrats, 77 percent of independents, and 67 percent of Republicans support this policy, as do majorities of Catholics (76 percent) and white evangelical Protestants (68 percent).

Support for the central provisions of the DREAM Act is similarly broad. Nearly seven in ten (68 percent) Americans favor allowing illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they join the military or go to college, including 79 percent of Democrats, 66 percent of independents, and 60 percent of Republicans.

However, the survey also found strong evidence of the power of partisanship at work among rank and file Americans. The survey split the sample into two demographically identical groups. The first group simply received the executive action on immigration and DREAM Act policy questions; the second group received the same verbatim questions, with a twist—the proposal was identified as “Obama's policy.” The findings show a significant “Obama Effect” across both questions.

When there is no mention of Obama, two-thirds (67 percent) of Republicans favor allowing illegal immigrants who are parents of those with legal status to avoid deportation if they meet certain requirements. But when Obama is linked to the policy, support among Republicans drops 16 points to 51 percent. Support among independents also falls 13 points when Obama is linked to the policy, from 77 percent to 64 percent. Among Democrats, there is no statistically significant effect in support.

The “Obama Effect” is even more pronounced in attitudes about the DREAM Act. When Obama is not identified with the policy, six in ten (60 percent) Republicans favor allowing illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status if they attend college or join the military. Once Obama is identified with the policy, Republican attitudes invert: Support plummets 23 points to only 37 percent, while opposition rises to nearly 6-in-10 (58 percent). Of course, these measures capture only the power of partisanship on the ground. There is an additional, powerful layer of partisan forces at work among Republican members of Congress, especially in the House, who have been driven by short-term tactical thinking focused on appeasing their most conservative constituents, who show up in low-turnout primaries and midterm elections. But now that the midterms are in the rear-view mirror and GOP strategists are looking down the road to 2016, the survey offers three findings that would be prudent inputs to the longer-term political calculus.

First, given that majorities of rank and file Republicans generally support most immigration-reform policies—not only temporary deferred action for children brought here as minors and their parents, but even a path to citizenship (53 percent)—Republican candidates could back these immigration policies without stepping outside the mainstream opinion of their party. Second, the GOP should take note that nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of Americans—including 62 percent of Republicans—say Republicans in Congress should prioritize passing comprehensive immigration-reform legislation over legislation that would overturn Obama’s immigration policies.

Perhaps most importantly, the Republican Party should take notice of President Obama’s rapidly rising job approval among Hispanics. In October 2014, Hispanics were clearly frustrated with Obama; fewer than half (46 percent) approved of the job he was doing as president. Shortly after his December announcement to take executive action on immigration, [Obama’s approval rating](#) increased 16 points to 62 percent. [Gallup’s most recent numbers](#) from late January have Obama’s job approval among Hispanics up a few more points to 65 percent.

All of these dynamics suggest that Republican strategists and candidates would not need to do much more than dust off their copies of the GOP’s 2012 election [post-mortem report](#), which laid out a straightforward recommendation:

... Among the steps Republicans take in the Hispanic community and beyond we must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform. If we do not, our Party’s appeal will continue to shrink to its core constituencies only. We also believe that comprehensive immigration reform is consistent with Republican economic policies that promote job growth and opportunity for all.

As the GOP looks to 2016 and beyond, it will certainly be easier to chart a more familiar course that avoids conflict with a Tea Party base that holds more negative views toward immigrants and is opposed to immigration reform. But PRRI’s recent research, consistent with the GOP’s own post-mortem report, suggests that this path is a temptation that should be avoided, at least if the GOP is serious about finding inroads to connect with Hispanic voters.

Robert P. Jones is the CEO of the [Public Religion Research Institute](#), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization focusing on religion, values, and public life.

AUSTIN-AMERICAN STATESMAN: Immigrant rights groups rally at Capitol

By Tim Eaton

February 11, 2015

<http://www.statesman.com/news/news/immigrant-rights-groups-rally-at-capitol/nj8nc/>

Advocates for immigrant rights from all over Texas gathered Wednesday for a rally on the south steps of the Capitol to oppose some measures filed by GOP legislators and to push for other proposals that would benefit the immigrant community in the state.

The Reform Immigration for Texas Alliance, or RITA, and other immigrant rights organizations organized the event that drew hundreds of supporters to hear from Hispanic state lawmakers, such as Sen. José Rodríguez, D-El Paso, Rep. Armando Walle, D-Houston and Rep. Roberto Alonzo, D-Dallas, and several advocates.

Much of the rally was dedicated to bashing Senate Bill 185, the measure by Sen. Charles Perry, R-Lubbock, that would outlaw sanctuary cities and prohibit cities from passing laws to restrict police from asking about immigration status. Attendees at the rally said the measure, which failed to pass in 2011, would create a fearful environment for Texas Hispanics who might be profiled by law enforcement officers.

Perry said in a statement in November that his bill “is a commonsense measure that will address the ongoing problem of sanctuary cities in Texas and hopefully open up dialogue on what other measures we can do at a state and federal level to solve our crisis in illegal immigration.”

Marta Sanchez made the trip to Austin from McAllen with her colleagues from La Union Puebla Entero, or LUPE, to tell lawmakers they are concerned about some bills and in favor of others.

"We came today because we have four issues that are very important to us," Sanchez said from the Capitol steps.

She came to advocate to allow for driver's permits for everyone of driving age in Texas, even if they are here without authorization. Permits would make the roads safer because more people would be able to get insurance, she said.

She also came to fight to preserve in-state tuition for Texas high school graduates who are living in the U.S. illegally. After all, she said, they are Texans. She also channelled Texas Association of Business President Bill Hammond who said at the rally that it would be "unconscionable" to deny some young Texans in-state tuition, and keeping the policy in place would lead to a better educated and trained workforce.

Sanchez also said she made the drive north to Austin to fight sanctuary cities legislation and to call for more accountability and transparency from the Texas Department of Public Safety. Also in attendance at the rally were dozens of preachers from the Coalition of the Evangelical Alliances of Texas. The pastors held a prayer in the Capitol Rotunda before the 11 a.m. rally. Abraham Pérez, a pastor at Austin's Iglesia Familiar Ebenezer, said his opposition to SB 185 was the main reason for his appearance at the Capitol.

"It will divide and destroy families," said Pérez, who is also a member of the coalition. "It creates fear in families, especially in children."

Young people with parents who are in the U.S. illegally will have to worry about the parents being deported, if Perry's bill passes, he said.

BAPTIST PRESS: ERLC's agenda includes religious liberty, life

Feb. 16, 2015

<http://www.bpnews.net/44231/erlcs-agenda-includes-religious-liberty-life>

WASHINGTON (BP) -- Measures to protect religious freedom and the sanctity of human life top the 2015 legislative agenda for the Southern Baptist Convention's public policy entity.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) unveiled Feb. 11 its goals for the new congressional session. Unlike last year, the new Congress will be controlled by one party, the Republicans. The change from a divided Congress occurred in November, when the GOP won control of the Senate.

The ERLC faces the challenge not only of gaining passage of its priorities in the Senate and House of Representatives but of overcoming the frequent opposition of the White House, where Democratic President Barack Obama has two more years.

The ERLC acknowledged the political realities in its legislative agenda.

"While the environment remains very toxic politically, we know God has an agenda of His own," said ERLC President Russell Moore and Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy. "We will seek to understand His will as we bring Southern Baptist biblical convictions to bear on the great public policy questions of our day."

Religious liberty is particularly important at this time, according to the ERLC.

"The ERLC exists to be a witness to and advocate for issues of the common good important to Baptists," Moore said in a news release announcing the legislative agenda. "In a cultural moment when religious freedom is increasingly imperiled, with a new Congress, we have new opportunities to engage on these important issues, and I look forward to working with our team to engage in the public square for the cause of religious freedom and the common good."

Among the ERLC's religious freedom goals are:

-- Passage of the Marriage and Religious Freedom Act, which would bar the federal government from discriminating against a person who acts on his belief that marriage should be limited to a man and a woman or that sex is reserved for marriage. Photographers, bakers and florists who have refused to participate in same-sex ceremonies because of their Christian convictions have lost in court or suffered financially despite their appeals to the right to exercise their religion.

-- Approval of the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, which would exempt from the Obama administration's abortion/contraception mandate in the 2010 health-care law those who object because of religious convictions. It also would protect the conscience rights of health-care providers and institutions that refuse to provide or pay for abortions or make referrals to abortion providers.

-- Adoption of legislation to protect the freedom of adoption agencies to place children in households based on the entities' religious convictions.

-- Appointment by the president of a special envoy called for in the Near East and South Central Asia Religious Freedom Act, which became law last year. The envoy would promote religious liberty in such countries as Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq and Pakistan.

-- Reauthorization of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan advisory panel that informs Congress, the White House and State Department on the condition of religious liberty overseas.

The sanctity of human life is still "a chief concern," Moore and Duke wrote in the agenda. "While we are not yet at the place politically or culturally to reverse the horrific 1973 Supreme Court decisions legalizing abortion on demand, we believe some steps to rein in the worst abuses are possible. Several bills offer us the opportunity to do just that."

Among those bills, they said, are:

-- The Pain-capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which would prohibit abortions on babies 20 weeks or more after fertilization based on scientific evidence that a child in the womb experiences pain by that point in gestation. The House was scheduled to vote on the bill Jan. 22, but its leaders canceled the vote after some GOP members raised concerns about a reporting requirement for victims of rape or incest. New language on the reporting requirement is being formulated, according to the ERLC.

-- The No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act, which would institute a permanent, government-wide ban on federal funding of abortion by standardizing prohibitions on such funds that now exist in various federal programs. It also would make certain Americans can identify whether abortion is covered in health insurance plans. The House passed the proposal Jan. 22.

-- The Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act, which would outlaw abortion based on the sex of an unborn child. The ERLC is seeking inclusion in the legislation of a ban on race-selection abortion.

Other proposals on the ERLC's agenda include:

-- The State Marriage Defense Act, which will direct the federal government to look at a person's state of legal residence in deciding marital status of same-sex couples.

-- The Children in Families First Act, which would streamline the process for American households attempting to adopt children overseas.

-- Sufficient funding for the Broadcasting Board of Governors' effort to establish technology to circumvent Internet firewalls in such countries as China and Vietnam.

-- Immigration reform that is "just and compassionate" and includes undocumented immigrants.

The ERLC will continue to oppose passage of the Employment Non-discrimination Act, which would prohibit workplace discrimination on the basis of homosexual, bisexual or transgender status. The bill fails "to take into consideration all faith-based organizations or the faith-informed convictions of for-profit business owners," Moore and Duke said.

Other issues the ERLC intends to address, Moore and Duke said, include human trafficking, criminal justice reform, hunger, pornography, homosexuality, gambling, predatory payday lending and poverty.

The ERLC's legislative agenda may be accessed online [here](#).

BAPTIST PRESS: Immigration ruling: 'beyond mere enforcement'

by David Roach

[Monday, February 23, 2015](#)

<http://www.bpnews.net/44271/immigration-ruling-beyond-mere-enforcement>

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (BP) -- The Obama administration has appealed a federal judge's ruling blocking implementation of a program that would potentially grant "legal presence" to some 4 million undocumented immigrants. The administration also asked a federal court to stay the ruling.

On the day the appeal was filed, a Baptist college president noted the Obama administration's "selective enforcement of immigration policies."

"Everyone has to be under the same law," Barry Creamer, president of Criswell College in Dallas and a trustee of Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, told Baptist Press in written comments Feb. 23. "To many observers the president's selective enforcement of immigration policies appears to establish a de facto set of laws for longtime [illegal] immigrants distinct from the rules legal immigrants followed often at great sacrifice. But what is most disconcerting in the present moment is the president's apparent push against the checks and balances between the three branches of government."

The ERLC has called for immigration reform that would provide border and workplace security; uphold the rule of law; respect family unity; and establish a path to legal status for those who want to live in America permanently and are willing to pay penalties and meet the requirements. U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen ruled Feb. 16 that a deferred-deportation program initiated by the Department of Homeland Security may not be implemented while a lawsuit is being decided, in which 26 states challenged the measure. The program, known as Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), would allow illegal immigrants who entered the U.S. before age 16 to apply for "legal presence" status and work permits in renewable three-year increments.

The states challenging DAPA allege that applications for legal presence status likely will receive "only a pro forma" review before being granted, according to Hanen's 123-page opinion. A similar program denied only 5 percent of approximately 723,000 applications for legal status through the end of 2014, Hanen wrote.

In an emergency motion asking a federal court to keep DAPA in effect while an appeal of Hanen's ruling is decided, Sarah Saldana, director of U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement, wrote that blocking DAPA "interferes with the Federal Government's comprehensive strategy for enforcing our immigration laws." DAPA was among a package of controversial executive actions on immigration announced by Obama in November.

Hanen, a George W. Bush appointee based in Brownsville, Texas, ruled that the state of Texas -- perhaps along with other states -- will "suffer an injury" because of the program, has legal standing to challenge the program and possesses "a substantial likelihood of succeeding" in its lawsuit.

In 2013-14, Texas absorbed at least \$58 million in education costs stemming from illegal immigration and in 2008 incurred \$716 million in uncompensated medical care provided to illegal aliens, Hanen noted -- figures likely to increase if the number of undocumented immigrants increases.

The Department of Homeland Security "was not given any 'discretion by law' to give 4.3 million removable aliens what DHS itself labels as 'legal presence,'" Hanen wrote. "In fact the law mandates that these illegally-present individuals be removed.

"The DHS has adopted a new rule that substantially changes both the status and employability of millions. These changes go beyond mere enforcement or even non-enforcement of this nation's immigration scheme. It inflicts major costs on both the states and federal government," Hanen wrote.

If a stay of Hanen's order is granted, the administration believes it can begin accepting applications for the program as it appeals the ruling.

"We will seek that appeal because we believe that when you evaluate the legal merits of the argument, that there is solid legal foundation for the president to take the steps that he announced late last year to reform our broken immigration system," White House press secretary Josh Earnest said.

In November, ERLC President Russell Moore called Obama's executive action "an unwise and counterproductive move," stating his preference for immigration reform to occur "through the legislative process." (See BP story [here](#).)

In 2011, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Phoenix approved a resolution on immigration reform that called for the advancement of the Gospel while pursuing justice and compassion. The resolution urged the government to make a priority of border security and holding businesses accountable in their hiring. It also requested that public officials establish after securing the borders "a just and compassionate path to legal status, with appropriate restitutionary measures, for those undocumented immigrants already living in our country." Debate over the resolution suggested disagreement among Southern Baptists on how the federal government should handle America's 11-12 million illegal immigrants. An amendment to delete the paragraph calling for "a just and compassionate path to legal status" failed by a 51.3-48.4 margin. The Resolutions Committee proposed an amendment, which was accepted by messengers, clarifying that the resolution was "not to be construed as support for amnesty for any undocumented immigrant."

Creamer of Criswell College noted that "thoughtful believers have several issues to work through regarding the recent immigration conflict between the states and federal government, and now even within the federal government between the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

"First and foremost in many believers' minds on both sides of the political aisle is the compassion we have and wish to express for every immigrant in our country -- legal or otherwise. Too many immigration discussions reveal racist tendencies. At the same time, the only way genuine compassion for every person can be realized is for all to be under the same rule of law. In a just society there cannot be one set of laws for some immigrants and another set of laws for other immigrants; neither can there be one law for citizens and another for outsiders," Creamer said.

Also ran:

BIBLICAL RECORDER

<http://www.brnow.org/News/February-2015/Immigration-ruling-beyond-mere-enforcement>

CHRISTIAN POST (Rodriguez Column): 'McFarland USA' Is the Prophetic Voice the Immigration Reform Debate Needs

By [Samuel Rodriguez](#)

February 25, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/mcfarland-usa-is-the-prophetic-voice-the-immigration-reform-debate-needs-134747/>

Seated behind an elderly Mexican American couple, my wife and I stood moved and motivated as we watched Kevin Costner's latest movie, "McFarland U.S.A." The story of immigrant young men, who worked in the fields picking fruits and vegetables in addition to attending High School and running in cross country competitions, re-ignited our commitment to immigration reform. With discretion so as to not reveal the ending of this true story, the film confirmed for me a simple truth: that in spite of recent actions and inaction by our elected officials, the issues surrounding our nation's immigration policies will not go away. Immigration reform is, at the risk of sounding overly optimistic, inevitable. A powerful and transformative assurance of this inevitability exists, what I call the "prophetic imperative."

This biblically based impetus has solidified in the hearts of the emerging Christ-following generation as the following truths: that silence is not an option, truth must never be sacrificed on the altar of expediency and today's complacency is tomorrow's captivity.

In other words, how can we be so certain that immigration reform will take place? Simply stated, as long as God's word lives, Matthew 25 stands preached, and God's Spirit moves convicting us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly before him. Immigration reform will take place because the Bible-believing evangelical community understands that the future of American Christianity lies in how to serve the fastest growing segment of our churches: the immigrant community.

How can I come to such conclusions on the heels of an attempt by Congress to defund the President's executive action expanding deferment to approximately 5 million additional undocumented, hard working individuals created in God's image? Simply stated, from a practical standpoint, immigration reform will inevitably take place because — by all accounts, including acquiescence by the most animated opponents of reform — mass deportation will not and can never happen.

Furthermore, America's political landscape assures us that immigration reform will take place because without it, Republicans will never acquire the necessary 32 to 35 percent of the Latino vote necessary to retake Pennsylvania Avenue. In essence, the party of Lincoln and Reagan must cross the Jordan of immigration reform in order to enter the promise land of America's Hispanic American electorate.

At the end of the day the immigrant community, so beautifully depicted in "McFarland U.S.A.," reveal to us all the certainty that these hard-working, God loving, family-embracing individuals stand poised to enrich the collective American experience.

As the film came to an end, my wife nudged me and pointed to an elderly Mexican American man in front of us who was quietly weeping while on the screen the immigrant teens sang the national anthem. For his sake, and for Americans, I still believe that one day the challenges our current immigration policies pose will be reformed, and the following biblical truth will be affirmed: what we sow in tears we will reap with joy.

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and Hispanic Evangelical Association.

CHRISTIAN POST: So. Baptist Leader David Platt Says Bible Should Drive How We Handle Illegal Immigrants, Fix Broken Legal System

By Leonardo Blair , CP Reporter

February 18, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/so-baptist-leader-david-platt-says-bible-should-drive-how-we-handle-illegal-immigrants-fix-broken-legal-system-134276/>

(Photo: The Christian Post/Sonny Hong)

David Platt, The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala., speaks on the opening night of 2014 SBC Pastors' Conference in Baltimore, Md., on Sunday, June 8, 2014.

Newly elected president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Pastor David Platt, recently charged that there is a biblical foundation for treating illegal immigrants with dignity and love, not knowing that just days later a federal judge on Monday would block President Barack Obama's executive action on immigration expected to give legal protection to five million illegal immigrants.

"We've got to begin to think about immigrants whether legal or illegal not as problems to be solved but as people to be loved and to think through how can we address what is clearly out-of-date legislation with the current labor market in our country, to think through how do we work to establish and enforce just laws that address immigration which I think should include securing our borders," said Platt in an [interview](#) with Dave Ross, KIRO Radio morning news anchor, published on Saturday .

"I think there are ways to do that. Holding business owners accountable for hiring practices, taking steps that ensure fairness to taxpaying citizens of our country ... I'm not saying it's simple by any means or there is easy answers. But there are biblical foundations that drive how we think about this issue," added Platt.

Platt's comments came just two days before Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott first broke the news Monday night via his Twitter account that U.S. District Court Judge for the Southern District of Texas, Andrew Hanen had granted his request to block Obama's Executive Amnesty Order.

"BREAKING: Federal Judge just granted my request to halt Obama's Executive Amnesty Order Nationwide," he tweeted.

The [three-page ruling](#) said no aspect of Obama's plan can move forward until there is "a final resolution of the merits of this case." The case is a lawsuit brought by 26 states against Obama's amnesty led by Abbott.

In a [statement](#) on the ruling Monday House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) said: "The president said 22 times he did not have the authority to take the very action on immigration he eventually did, so it is no surprise that at least one court has agreed. We will continue to follow the case as it moves through the legal process. Hopefully, Senate Democrats who claim to oppose this executive overreach will now let the Senate begin debate on a bill to fund the Homeland Security department."

Reacting to the decision, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh C. Johnson said while he did not agree with the ruling his office will have to comply with the ruling and would not be accepting requests to expand Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) and expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which was expected to begin on Wednesday.

"I strongly disagree with Judge Hanen's decision to temporarily enjoin implementation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) and expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The Department of Justice will appeal that temporary injunction; in the meantime, we recognize we must comply with it," said Johnson.

"Accordingly, the Department of Homeland Security will not begin accepting requests for the expansion of DACA tomorrow, February 18, as originally planned. Until further notice, we will also suspend the plan to accept requests for DAPA," he added.

President Barack Obama reiterated Johnson's position Tuesday evening and the Department of Justice said it will [challenge the ruling](#).

In the meantime Platt who is also promoting his latest book, *Counter Culture*, says Christians should be careful not allow politics to cloud biblical imperatives.

"The core commands of Jesus are love God and love your neighbor as yourself and we're talking about our neighbors," he said of immigrants. "That starts with a respect and an honor for the dignity of people around us who are from other countries who have immigrated to the United States legally or illegally. There are complicated issues that you and I both know, but there are biblical foundations that I know Christians have a tendency to bypass in jumping to a political position."

CHRISTIAN POST: White Evangelicals and Immigration Reform

By Lyman A. Kellstedt and Ruth Melkonian-Hoover , CP Guest Contributors

February 6, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/white-evangelicals-and-immigration-reform-133687/>

In our continuing and in-depth analysis of public opinion data on religion and immigration attitudes we have found that white evangelicals have been, and continue to be, the most opposed to immigration reform among religious groups. This finding has been present consistently over the past twenty years in dozens of surveys from polling organizations including the Pew

Research Center, the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), the General Social Surveys, and the American National Election Studies.

This strong opposition among evangelical laity has persisted despite the pro-reform advocacy efforts of numerous evangelical organizations and leaders. Evangelical advocacy began to develop during the Bush Administration's push for comprehensive immigration reform back in 2006-07. Today a much broader coalition of evangelical groups continues to deepen and expand this advocacy under the auspices of the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#) (EIT), formed in June 2012. There are minor hints of change — a [recent study](#) concludes that the informational campaigns by EIT in some states have contributed to marginal gains in support for immigration reform by white evangelicals. Overall, however, white evangelicals remain the religious group most opposed to immigration reform.

Part of the problem is that the expansive efforts of evangelical elites on immigration have not been matched by increased teaching and preaching on immigration by evangelical clergy. Evidence from 2010 and 2013 surveys from Pew and PRRI shows that evangelical laity perceive that less than one in six of their clergy ever openly discusses the subject of immigration in the church. When they do speak about reform, and speak favorably, attitudes toward the immigrant and immigration policy shift in a more supportive direction. But given the dearth of such messages, immigration policy attitudes are derived mostly from other sources.

What are these sources, and which of them are the most important? We have attempted to pinpoint the significant factors in extensive multivariate statistical analysis. First of all, religious beliefs and practices have only a modest impact, with Biblical literalists most opposed and regular churchgoers most favorable to reform. In addition, high levels of education are associated with more favorable attitudes toward reform as is having at least one parent born abroad. In no surprise, consumers of conservative media are opposed to "liberal" policy changes (the Fox News effect), as are those who perceive that national economic conditions are bad. But two factors dwarf the above in terms of importance: attitudes toward Hispanics and illegal immigrants, as well as the political preferences of individual evangelicals. Conservative issue positions and Republican Party identifications are the norm for evangelicals, and the stronger these positions are held, the greater the opposition to immigration reform. These partisan and ideological proclivities suggest that the attitudes of rank and file evangelicals are unlikely to change unless Republicans in Congress do an "about face" and support immigration changes that at least allow undocumented immigrants to gain legal status, whether permanent or temporary. Of course even such an "about face" does not guarantee attitude change by the laity. Although the national political context cannot be altered easily, evangelical attitudes toward Hispanics and illegal immigrants could be. And for those wishing to do so, the church can play a significant role, continuing the efforts of many congregations to assist immigrants to assimilate, as well as encouraging substantial interactions between immigrants and citizens overall. But, it may be even more important to help congregations see the moral components of the immigration issue—honoring the Biblical values of "welcoming the stranger," keeping families together, considering the justice implications of migration nationally and globally, and acknowledging the conditions in other societies that lead to immigration in the first place. Clergy have done this historically with issues like race, abortion, marriage, and poverty. There is no reason why it can't be done with immigration. Wise leadership at the congregational level can, over time, minimize evangelical opposition to immigrants and promote the pursuit of just, reasonable, and merciful immigration reform.

Lyman A. Kellstedt is emeritus professor of political science at Wheaton College. Ruth Melkonian-Hoover is associate professor of political science at Gordon College.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY: Why Politics Still Matters

The temptation to withdraw is ever with us.

Michael Wear

February 12, 2015

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/february-web-only/why-politics-still-matters.html>

It's not news that politics can be dreary and dysfunctional. For this reason, as we begin another long season of presidential election politics, many Christians are running for cover, eager to avoid politics as much as possible. The reasons for withdrawal have become predictable. Some suggest politics is too broken, too corrupt, for Christians get involved in without sacrificing faithfulness. Others claim politics is a distraction from more spiritual pursuits. These are both long-held, persistent ideas, each with their own merits, but they are ultimately incomplete. A more persuasive justification for political disengagement is the notion that "culture is upstream from politics." According to this perspective, political decisions are predetermined by the state of the culture. If you want to change politics, the logic goes, drop politics and change the culture, and the politics will follow.

Google the phrase "culture is upstream from politics" and you will find that it first appears in the 21st century in May 2006, in a [blog post](#) from The Washington Institute. It shows up again 18 months later in an [editorial](#) by Michael Gerson, who noted the phrase is "something many conservatives say," and then went on to rebut it. By far, the most vocal advocate of this thinking was, perhaps surprisingly, conservative publisher Andrew Breitbart. Shortly after Breitbart's death, columnist Byron York [wrote](#) that this lesson was Breitbart's "greatest gift" to conservatives:

Breitbart knew instinctively, as people in Washington and most other places did not, that movies, television programs, and popular music send out deeply political messages every hour of every day. They shape the culture, and then the culture shapes politics. Influence those films and TV shows and songs, and you'll eventually influence politics.

James Davison Hunter is also credited with inspiring a renewed focus on culture in his 2010 book, [To Change the World](#). Hunter argued that American Christianity was overly focused on gaining political influence; he eschewed political involvement in favor of a "faithful presence" in cultural institutions.

The rise of this idea is inseparable from the decline of the Bush Administration. George W. Bush represented the political victory the Religious Right: they had finally elected "one of their own." The inability of Bush's presidency to significantly restrict or ban abortion, pass a federal marriage amendment, among other conservative initiatives, deflated those who thought they had "victory" in hand. The idea that culture is upstream from politics is an attempt to diagnose a failed political strategy. It argues that Christians fought and lost the political battle because they first lost "culture wars." Rather than blame political tactics for their failure—for instance, hyperbolic rhetoric and unnecessarily prohibitive political stances—they point instead to Murphy Brown and Will & Grace.

Contrary to the metaphor, the relationship between politics and culture is not like a mountain stream, with the ideas of culture pulled down into political action.

But contrary to the metaphor, the relationship between politics and culture is not like a mountain stream, with the ideas of culture pulled down into political action. Instead, politics and culture are like two moons orbiting the planet of our public fears, desires, and aspirations, each moon with a gravitational pull that affects the other. Culture is not the creator of political and social change. Culture and politics work together; they influence one another. And we have many instances in which politics actually changed the culture: like the government ban on smoking in public places and the abolishing of Jim Crow. Politicians and government bureaucrats are culture-makers too.

COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: Embrace the Challenges of the Times Together, Hispanic Leader Tells CCCU Presidents

February 2, 2015

<https://www.cccu.org/news/articles/2015/PCSalguero>

WASHINGTON – Drawing on Scripture and his own experiences as a national leader, Gabriel Salguero, president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC), offered advice on leading through change and crisis to a gathering of presidents at the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities’ annual Presidents Conference.

“Sister, brother, if you are the leader of an institution ... it’s because you have every gift, every ability, every relationship you need to see God glorified, his church edified, and our enemies terrified,” Salguero said.

Salguero, who shared his own experience of leaving a job at Princeton to start NaLEC in the midst of the economic recession, cited a verse in 1 Chronicles 12 that described the men of Issachar as those “who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.” That description, Salguero said, provides the two major charges of Christian leadership: discerning the times and establishing a direction.

“We must understand the times. We must aptly describe the contexts – and there is not a context but multiple contexts; reality is always multilayered – to which and from which we do ministry,” he said. “It should be a core skill for executive leadership. Understanding the times is in high demand and low supply.”

One key sign of the times Salguero noted was the growing diversity and changing demographics in the United States, particularly the evangelical church. Though the changing demographics can present challenges to Christian higher education, Salguero emphasized the tremendous opportunity for the church.

Salguero is no stranger to this topic. He is a national leader on the issue and has met frequently with both Republican and Democratic presidents and congressional leaders on issues of immigration, education, poverty and criminal justice. He and his wife, Jeanette, are also pastors of the Lamb’s Church in New York City, which worships in English, Spanish and Mandarin and has a wide variety of outreach programs.

Additionally, along with the CCCU, NaLEC is a member of the Evangelical Immigration Table, a broad coalition of evangelical organizations and leaders advocating for immigration reform consistent with biblical values.

“I assure you many of us [Hispanics] want to partner with you in the noble task of Christian education. I assure you that we want to learn from you and, if you have the humility, to teach you,” Salguero said. “I assure you that God is not intimidated by institutions, by fallenness, by restriction. It does not take God by surprise – he is not intimidated.”

Salguero also emphasized the need for Christian colleges and universities to tackle the challenges of the times together, to never overestimate the impact of a cultural crisis and to never underestimate the power of God.

“It is in crisis that the church somehow, through the work of the Holy Spirit, has its greatest growth,” he said.

GENERATION PROGRESS: Americans Support Recent Immigration Policies—But Not When Obama’s Name Is Attached To Them

By Anu Kumar

February 17, 2015

<http://genprogress.org/voices/2015/02/17/34773/majority-of-americans-support-recent-immigration-policies-but-not-when-obamas-name-is-attached-to-them/>

The news coming out of Capitol Hill regarding immigration has demonstrated contention between the Republican-led Congress and the Obama administration—another example of partisan gridlock. But in reality, it seems that the president’s executive actions on immigration are broadly popular, especially when his name is not directly related to the actions.

[New research](#) from the Public Religion Research Institution shows “why GOP strategists would do well to advise against a partisan showdown on this terrain.” Based on the research completed by PRRI, Republicans should avoid appealing to their most conservative voters because they risk

undermining policies supported by the mainstream portion of their party. Additionally, they would risk isolating potential Hispanic voters.

The [survey](#) showed that roughly 76 percent of Americans support the executive actions when it came down to the core initiatives the president is trying to push forward—specifically, allowing the parents of children with legal status to stay in the country for up to three years if they meet certain requirements.

This policy transcended partisan and religious lines; 87 percent of Democrats, 77 percent of independents, and 67 percent of Republicans are in support of this policy. Additionally, 76 percent of Catholics and 68 percent of white evangelical Protestants support it. The base provisions in the DREAM Act also fostered similar levels of support.

While there is a broad level of support, this quickly changed when individuals were asked questions with Obama's name associated to them. The first group was asked questions about the executive action in relation to immigration and DREAM Act policy. The second group was then asked the same questions, but the proposal was instead referred to as "Obama's policy." The responses changed.

"When there is no mention of Obama, two-thirds (67 percent) of Republicans favor allowing illegal immigrants who are parents of those with legal status to avoid deportation if they meet certain requirements. But when Obama is linked to the policy, support among Republicans drops 16 points to 51 percent," PRRI researchers wrote. This drop was even more dramatic in attitudes about the DREAM Act.

While this only illustrates partisanship at the ground level among the American public, it does display a disconnect between the public and the current actions of Congress. Regardless of how those surveyed responded, it still remains the responsibility of those in Congress to put partisan efforts to work.

The executive action aimed at expanding the DACA program was expected to go into effect on February 18, but a U.S. District Court judge ruled that the president [does not have the legal authority](#) to carry out his orders. The White House has said that the Justice Department will appeal the decision.

The expansion of the program will allow for parents of children with legal status to remain in the United States, even if they are undocumented. While the solution is temporary, it allows them to remain in the United States for three years, as long as they have already been in the U.S. for five years and successfully pass the background check. Congress has yet to take on full comprehensive immigration reform to find more long-lasting solutions.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE (Gray Matters Blog): 'Most religious voices want immigration reform'

Evangelical leader Gabriel Salguero on the growing religious movement

By Olivia P. Tallet

February 10, 2015

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/gray-matters/article/Will-Pope-Francis-ask-Congress-for-help-with-6072703.php#/1>

Gabriel Salguero, president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, speaks for immigration reform in front of the U.S. Capitol.

In September, when Pope Francis speaks before the U.S. Congress, will he advocate to legalize the status of millions of undocumented immigrants in this country?

If so, he'll join a growing religious movement to reform the U.S. immigration system, says Gabriel Salguero, leader of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition and a board member of the National Association of Evangelicals.

"From the evangelical perspective, we expect that Pope Francis will use his visit to the U.S. Congress to advocate for the most vulnerable, such as the immigrants," he said.

Salguero was in Houston last weekend to participate in Call to Action on Immigration, which backed President Obama's executive actions on immigration. As head of the NLEC, he represents the roughly 7 million Latino evangelical Christians who live in the U.S.

He spoke to reporter Olivia P. Tallet in Spanish. Here's a translated excerpt from that interview.

Question: What makes you think that Pope Francis will advocate for immigrants?

Answer: I feel hopeful because Pope Francis is coming to America and he said he'd like to come in through the border with Mexico. Top leaders of all religions are in favor of resolving this issue. We're a nation of laws, but we're also a nation of immigrants. That's enough. Hopefully the Pope's visit, along with the evangelical voices, will have an impact on the House and the Senate to move this forward.

Q: What do you think the Pope will do before Congress?

A: If what's happened in recent months serves as a testament to the purpose of Pope Francis, he'll defend the same things as the Gospel: the poor, the immigrants and, of course, life. I think the Pope, as a spiritual leader, will echo what the Catholic bishops have already said in the U.S. The National Association of Evangelicals, to which the National Latino Evangelical Coalition belongs, is 90 percent Anglo. I'm part of its board of directors, and it has also asked for an immigration reform.

So I believe the Pope will make that spiritual call to try to integrate those nearly 12 million people [undocumented immigrants] created in the image of God, whether Latinos, Asians, Irish, Africans or Jamaicans... For us [the question] is what can we do to improve the situation of these people created in the image of God and who are in a political limbo.

Q: You've called it a political limbo. Why should churches be involved in this?

A: For us, this is a moral issue. We're evangelicals, and we're usually branded as social conservatives, but this is not a partisan issue. It's a service. It's what Jesus taught us in Matthew 25 when He said: "I was a stranger and yet took me in."

The Bible tells you that as you behave with a widow, with a widower, an orphan and a foreigner, you'll be judged accordingly. So for us this is a spiritual issue, a moral issue.

We don't take sides with Republicans nor with Democrats. We've spent years talking with Republicans and Democrats about a bipartisan immigration reform because as pastors, we want to serve our communities. We want to welcome them to our churches with Christian love and affection while laws are being reformed.

The reality is that most religious voices want immigration reform. It doesn't matter whether it's Catholic bishops, Anglos or Hispanic evangelicals or Jews.

I spoke at the [U.S.] Chamber of Commerce last year, and they also want a reform. And though we had hopes, it didn't happen last year.

Q: Why do you think it didn't happen?

A: It takes political will. The lack of progress on an immigration reform is illogical. There's no vision of the future and no memory of the past. This has always been a country of immigrants, of residents who get along, of integrated families, so I think that what we really need is leadership.

Q: Don't you think that the president's executive actions are a step forward in all this?

A: Yes, and the Latino evangelical community, our coalition, supports the executive actions. But we also want a bipartisan comprehensive reform [with a path to citizenship]. We don't want more excuses, no more political rhetoric. We need leadership to solve this problem. Our [immigration] laws are from the 20th century, and in the 21st century we need to modernize the immigration system in the United States.

The original Spanish version of this interview, "[Evangélicos latinos esperan que el Papa abogue por inmigrantes ante Congreso.](#)" appeared in La Voz, the Chronicle's Spanish-language publication.

[Bookmark Gray Matters.](#) It doesn't matter whether you're Catholic bishops, Anglos or Hispanic evangelicals or Jews.

KVUE-ABC: Advocacy groups call for immigration reform

By Tina Shively

February 11, 2015

<http://www.kvue.com/story/news/local/2015/02/11/immigrant-advocacy-groups-hold-events-at-state-capitol/23233061/>

Advocacy groups say Texas should be front and center in the debate over immigration reform. Reform Immigration for Texas Alliance sponsored Wednesday's events sponsored the "State Advocacy Day for Immigrant Integration and Government Accountability" took place at the Texas State Capitol on Wednesday.

The group wants to educate elected officials on how to fix our 'broken immigration system' with fair, humane and sensible policies.

They hope lawmakers will draw up legislation that would benefit both sides in the debate by doing things like keeping families together; establish a responsible and accountable border policy; and developing a practical system for future workers.

"I think its important for us to express our opposition to measures that we think generally characterize immigrants as law breakers, as opposed to focusing on their contributions -- positive contributions -- to our economy, to the state and the nation," said Sen. Jose Rodriguez (D-El Paso).

Hundreds of pastors from the Coalition of the Evangelical Alliances of Texas gathered at the Capitol rotunda for a prayer during Immigration Action Day in the morning.

The final event will be a policy briefing at 2:30 p.m. on the Impact of State Immigration and Border Proposal.

NATIONAL JOURNAL: Across the Great Divide

Can any Republican unify the party in the 2016 primaries?

By [Ronald Brownstein](#)

February 18, 2015

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/political-connections/across-the-great-divide-20150218>

No Republican presidential hopeful since George W. Bush in 2000 has generated widespread support across the party's class and cultural divides. The next GOP nominee may be the candidate who most closely matches his success.

The Republican presidential primary electorate now divides about evenly between two factions. The GOP's "managerial" wing consists of voters who are generally more affluent, better educated, more secular, and somewhat less ideological. The party's "populist" wing draws on the overlapping circles of evangelical Christians, blue-collar voters, and the most committed conservative believers.

As a Harvard MBA who memorably identified "Jesus" as his favorite philosopher, Bush largely transcended those divides. In the decisive 2000 primaries, Bush consistently beat John McCain, his principal rival, among both college and non-college voters. Bush dominated among voters who identified as religious conservatives and essentially matched McCain with those who did not.

By contrast, the nominees in 2008 and 2012, McCain and Mitt Romney, relied predominantly on managers to compensate for substantial resistance from the populists. Both men made major primary-season concessions to conservative activists (particularly on immigration) that damaged their general election appeal. Yet both still struggled among hard-core conservatives. Ultimately, McCain and Romney each followed a winning formula of 50/30: both attracted almost exactly 50 percent of non-evangelical voters and around 30 percent of evangelicals in Republican primaries, according to a cumulative analysis of exit polls by ABC News' Gary Langer.

One reason McCain and Romney overcame their limitations is they faced rivals with even narrower appeal. Mike Huckabee in 2008 and Rick Santorum in 2012 emerged as the principal

alternative to the front-runner through the same route: winning the Iowa caucus by consolidating support from evangelical Christians (who cast most votes there each time.) But neither could advance enough beyond that beachhead. Through all the primaries, Santorum cumulatively won fewer than one-in-five non-evangelicals, and Huckabee only one-in-ten, Langer found. "They allowed themselves to be labeled as 'the candidate of the social conservatives,'" says Jamie Johnson, an Iowa GOP central committee member who served as Santorum's state coalitions director. So while McCain and Romney did not display as much breadth as Bush in 2000, they won partly by showing better balance than their rivals. Can any of the 2016 candidates truly span the party—especially without taking positions that hurt their general election prospects? Although Chris Christie also could compete, Jeb Bush seems most likely to fill the McCain/Romney "managerial" slot. NBC/Marist polls released this week showed Bush already leading or tied with moderates in Iowa and South Carolina and running a close second (to Christie) among them in New Hampshire. Bush's strong social conservative record as Florida governor should open doors with evangelical Christians. But his support for immigration reform and especially the Common Core educational standards antagonizes many of their leaders. While the NBC/Marist surveys did not find lockstep rank-and-file evangelical opposition to common core or immigration reform, that resistance could harden in a campaign. Replicating the 50/30 formula that worked for McCain and Romney might be this Bush's best chance.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul has an eclectic appeal that could transcend some divides. But he faces a different barrier. With his "libertarian-ish" agenda and informal manner, Paul should run well with younger Republicans. His problem is that voters over 50 cast more than 60 percent of the 2012 primary votes. And many older Republicans may view Paul more as a provocative college professor than a potential commander-in-chief. In each of the NBC/Marist polls, Paul ran at least twice as well among Republicans under 45 than those who are older.

Huckabee, Santorum, surgeon Ben Carson, and Sen. Ted Cruz will duel for evangelical support in Iowa. Johnson thinks Cruz could assemble a broad coalition of conservatives, but other analysts are skeptical he (or the other three) can grow much past the party's ideological vanguard.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio might appeal widely but is struggling in Bush's shadow. That leaves Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker as the contender with potentially the broadest audience. The son of a Baptist minister who has dueled with public employee unions as governor, Walker "has an ability to bridge a couple of the lanes," says Scott Reed, Bob Dole's 1996 campaign manager. In all three NBC/Marist polls, Walker's support was virtually equal among evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans. Well positioned for breadth, his challenge will be depth—pulling deeply enough from either managers or populists to actually win the key contests. "When you are drawing from multiple camps ... you have to be strong enough that it's not a formula for second place," says former Iowa GOP chairman Brian Kennedy.

Historically, Iowa favors populists and New Hampshire prefers managers. If a manager like Bush wins Iowa because conservatives splinter, he would become very hard to beat. Alternately, if Iowa again elevates a populist winner who struggles to expand beyond evangelicals (such as Cruz), it would benefit the managers' favorite. But if Iowa gives its boost to Walker, his potential to cross the party's central divides could make him much more formidable than the past two caucus winners.

NORTHWEST IOWA REVIEW: Christian leader talks immigration

By Lindsay Hoepfner

January 30, 2015

http://www.nwestiowa.com/news/christian-leader-talks-immigration/article_24fc90d8-a8d7-11e4-a5ad-2bdf0b44d128.html?mode=story

ORANGE CITY—Matthew Soerens knows some Christians are fearful of immigrants. He points to a Pew Research Center survey showing that a slight majority of white evangelicals see immigrants — those here legally and not — as a threat to the United States and its jobs, customs and values. This week, though, Soerens urged various Orange City groups to see immigrants as a source of opportunity for the community, the country and the Gospel. “Maybe they’re a blessing. Maybe they’re people God has sent to us,” he said during chapel service Monday morning, Jan. 26, at Northwestern College in Orange City. Read more about Soerens — a Chicago-based church training specialist for World Relief and field director for the Evangelical Immigration Table — and his views on immigration reform in the Jan. 31 issue of The N’West Iowa REVIEW.

points.

[See attachments for full article].

TREVECHOES ONLINE: Trevecca hosts G92 forum on undocumented immigration

By Trevechoesonline

Feb. 11, 2015

<http://trevechoesonline.com/2015/02/11/trevecca-hosts-g92-forum-on-undocumented-immigration/>

Matthew Soerens, author of [*Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Truth, and Compassion in the Immigration Debates*](#) and church training specialist with [World Relief](#), conducted a forum on campus last week about the Christian response to undocumented immigration.

This forum was sponsored by the J.V. Morsch Center of Social Justice, the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#), and [G92](#), a student-led organization that strives to understand and make sense of to others the challenges and opportunities of immigration in ways that are consistent with biblical values of justice, compassion, and hospitality.

“Christians often find themselves torn between the desire to uphold the laws and the call to minister to the vulnerable,” said Soerens in his book *Welcoming the Stranger*.

The purpose of this discussion was to educate its student and faculty attendees on the U.S. immigration system and the situations facing the millions of undocumented immigrants in our country, including some of Trevecca’s students.

As a part of the undocumented immigration debate, Soerens addressed many economic and political concerns.

“According to the Wall Street Journal, 96 percent of economists say that undocumented immigrants have been beneficial to the economy. On average, foreign-born adults pay \$7,826 in taxes while their families receive \$4,422 per year in governmental benefits,” said Soerens.

“Immigrants make up about 13 percent of the US population. This means they’re buying 13 percent of all the iPads being sold; they’re buying 13 percent of all the McDonald’s cheeseburgers; they make up 13 percent of the nation’s consumers.”

In sponsoring these discussions, it is the hope of G92 that the next generation of Christian leaders will be well-equipped with an effective, biblical response to immigration and those who are affected by it.

“As Christians, we should be looking at it [undocumented immigration] from the position of our faith,” said Soerens. “We can look at it as an opportunity to respond with hospitality to those who are strangers and in need of help, or we can see those people as a threat and respond with hostility.”

Jamie Casler, director of the J.V. Morsch Center of Social Justice said the church was founded on being a source of help to those in need.

“Christians should be welcoming of undocumented immigrants, and we should be asking how we can support those in need. You see your brother or sister in need, you help them,” said Casler. “When we look at them through the lenses of dignity and worth and when we see them as being created in the image of God, we see them as our brothers and sisters in need, and then we can ask ourselves, What can we do to help?”

BRAZILIAN VOICE: Pesquisa: Evangélicos brancos é o maior grupo contra a reforma migratória

2/10/15

http://www.brazilianvoice.com/bv_noticias/pesquisa-evangelicos-brancos-e-o-maior-grupo-contra-reforma-migratoria.html

Essa forte oposição entre os evangélicos ainda persiste mesmo depois dos esforços pró reforma feitos por numerosas organizações e líderes evangélicos

A análise profunda da opinião pública no que diz respeito à religião e imigração revelou que os evangélicos brancos têm sido e continuam a ser o grupo que mais se opõe à reforma migratória entre os grupos religiosos. A descoberta tem sido a mesma durante as mais de 12 pesquisas realizadas ao longo dos últimos 20 anos por várias entidades, entre elas a Pew Research Center (PRC), a Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), a General Social Surveys e o American National Election Studies.

Essa forte oposição entre os evangélicos ainda persiste mesmo depois dos esforços pró reforma feitos por numerosas organizações e líderes evangélicos. A defesa evangélica começou a se desenvolver durante a tentativa da administração Bush a favor de uma reforma migratória ampla entre 2006 e 2007. Atualmente, uma coalisão muito mais ampla de grupos evangélicos continua a aprofundar e expandir sob os auspícios da Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT), formada em junho de 2012. Há poucos sinais de mudança; um estudo recente concluiu que as campanhas informativas do EIT em alguns estados têm contribuído para ganhos marginais de apoio à reforma migratória por parte de evangélicos brancos. No geral, os evangélicos brancos permanecem o maior grupo religioso opositor à reforma migratória.

Parte do problema é que a ampliação dos esforços das elites evangélicas na imigração não tem sido equiparada pelo aumento dos ensinamentos e pregação sobre a imigração pelo clero evangélico. Evidências decorrentes de pesquisas feitas entre 2010 e 2013 pelo Pew e o PRRI revelou que os evangélicos percebem que menos de 1 entre 6 sacerdotes discutem abertamente o tema migratório nas igrejas. Quando esses líderes religiosos abordam a imigração, de forma favorável, as atitudes com relação à imigração e os imigrantes tornam-se mais apoiadoras. Entretanto, devido à falta de tais mensagens, as atitudes com relação às políticas migratórias são geralmente derivadas de outras fontes.\

Que fontes são essas? Quais são as mais importantes? Primeiramente, crenças e práticas religiosas possuem um impacto modesto, com radicais mais opostos e frequentadores regulares às igrejas mais favoráveis à reforma. Além disso, altos níveis de educação estão associados com uma visão mais favorável da imigração, assim como ter pelo menos um dos pais nascidos no exterior. Sem surpresas, os consumidores de mídia conservadora se opõem às mudanças “liberais” de política (o efeito Fox News), assim como aqueles que sentem que as condições da economia nacional estão ruins.

Entretanto, dois fatores ultrapassam os outros anteriormente mencionados: O comportamento com relação aos hispânicos e os imigrantes indocumentados, assim como as preferências políticas dos evangélicos. Posições conservadoras e identificação com o Partido Republicano (GOP) são a norma entre os evangélicos e, quanto mais fortes forem essas preferências, maior é a oposição à reforma migratória. Esses aspectos partidários e ideológicos sugerem que as atitudes dos evangélicos tendem a não mudar ao menos que os republicanos no Congresso apoiem mudanças migratórias que pelo menos permitam a legalização do status dos indocumentados, seja permanente ou temporária. Obviamente, mesmo tais mudanças não garantem a mudança de comportamento por parte dos fiéis.

Embora o contexto político nacional não possa ser alterado facilmente, o comportamento dos evangélicos com relação aos hispânicos e indocumentados deveria e, para aqueles dispostos a fazê-lo, a igreja pode ter um papel fundamental, dando continuidade aos esforços de assimilação dos imigrantes, assim como encorajar o convívio entre imigrantes e cidadãos. Além disso, seria

muito mais importante ajudar as congregações a enxergar os componentes morais da imigração: honrando os valores bíblicos de “receber bem os estrangeiros”, manter as famílias unidas, o aspecto justo da imigração nacional e global, e reconhecer as condições em outras sociedades que as levaram a emigrar. O clero já fez isso historicamente abordando temas como raça, aborto, casamento e pobreza. Não há razão porque não possa feito com a imigração. Uma liderança consciente a nível do Congresso pode, ao longo do tempo, minimizar a oposição evangélica aos imigrantes e apoiar a realização de uma reforma migratória justa, razoável e compassiva, segundo Lyman A. Kellstedt, professor de Ciências Políticas no Wheaton College, e Ruth Melkonian Hoover, da Gordon College.

MARCH:

BAPTIST NEWS GLOBAL: Evangelicals support immigration reform, Baptists say; now it's Congress' turn

A poll shows that most evangelicals support comprehensive immigration reform, prompting some to assure legislators they have the needed support to enact legislation promoting border security and a path to citizenship.

By Jeff Brumley

March 19, 2015

<http://baptistnews.com/culture/social-issues/item/29915-evangelicals-support-immigration-reform-baptists-say-now-it-s-congress-turn>

A recent [LifeWay poll](#) showing strong support for immigration reform among evangelicals came as no surprise to Baptists involved in the reform movement, but they said it seems to remain a mystery to U.S. legislators.

A wide spectrum of Christian leaders have been meeting and speaking out for months, primarily through the Evangelical Immigration Table. Its participants range from charismatics and Presbyterians to conservative and moderate Baptists.

“We hear from faith leaders this can be done, but Congress is still afraid there will be too much pushback” on comprehensive immigration reform, said [Stephen Reeves](#), associate coordinator of partnerships and advocacy for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

“It’s the church’s job to educate [legislators] about their support,” Reeves said.

He and other Baptist leaders say there is plenty of evidence testifying to that support.

Survey shows unity

That includes the LifeWay poll released earlier this month. Among its findings is that 86 percent of American evangelicals want border security and 61 percent favor a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. And 68 percent want both.

Some of the results revealed biblical values behind those opinions: 72 percent say the unity of immigrant families should be protected and 82 percent said God-given dignity should be respected.

More than two-thirds of evangelicals said they want Congress to act this year, and half of those polled said they would vote for a candidate who supports immigration reform that includes border security and a path to citizenship, LifeWay researchers found.

‘The system is broken’

If nothing else, federal, state and other legislators should bear in mind that roughly 60,000 Hispanic teens, those born in the United States, turn 18 — voting age — every month, said Gus Reyes, director of the [Christian Life Commission](#), the ethics arm of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Politicians who support policies that focus only on border protection “are going to have to change their rhetoric,” he said.

“These emerging voters are sensitive to how they and their families have been treated,” Reyes said.

But change isn't coming only at the ballot box but also in people's hearts, he said.

For years, Hispanics, documented or not, have been meeting Americans, many of whom are believers who have shared the gospel with the immigrants.

Many of those immigrants have entered churches where they made decisions for Christ and were baptized. Many have been become Sunday school teachers, deacons and even ministers, Reyes said.

Then at some point many of them approach their pastors to admit they are in the U.S. illegally. "I have become right with God and I want to become right with the U.S. government — how do I do that?" he said.

"And for most of these folks, there is no way," he said. "The system is broken."

Seeing that situation has led many evangelicals to confront biblical passages like Leviticus 19:34, Micah 6:8, Luke 4:18 and Hebrews 13:2 — all of which command believers to treat foreigners in their midst as family.

"I don't see how you get around that," Reyes said.

Others can't see around it either and have begun talking about these issues in their churches, Reyes said. "Evangelicals have signed on and pastors are starting to preach about justice and on how the immigrant is to be treated."

'Something needs to be done'

Progressives, too, are sensing a broad-based coalition between themselves and conservative Christians on immigration reform.

And the unifying factor is Christ, said [LeDayne McLeese Polaski](#), executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, also known as BPFNA Bautistas por la Paz.

"All of these voices have excited me," Polaski said. "You're hard-pressed to find an issue more biblically based than hospitality to the immigrant."

It's also a good sign for immigration reform, she added.

"Every example of massive social change has involved creative and interesting coalitions of people who are coming at issues from different perspectives," Polaski said.

Reeves said the fact that coalition members may have different motivations for supporting immigration reform doesn't matter as long as they agree on the main point.

"There is uniform agreement that the system is broken and something needs to be done," Reeves said.

CHRISTIAN POST: Poll: 9 in 10 Evangelicals Say Bible Doesn't Influence Immigration Views

By Samuel Smith, CP Reporter

March 12, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/poll-9-in-10-evangelicals-say-bible-doesnt-influence-immigration-views-135584/>

Nine out of 10 Evangelicals say that the Scripture has no impact on their views toward immigration reform, according to a poll released Wednesday. The poll similarly found that nearly seven in 10 Evangelicals have never been encouraged by their church to reach out to immigrants.

The Christian polling organization LifeWay Research [surveyed 1,000 Evangelicals](#) on their attitudes toward immigration reform for the Evangelical Immigration Table and World Relief. The poll found that 61 percent of Evangelicals favor immigration reform that will provide a path toward citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Meanwhile, 86 percent of Evangelicals said they favor greater border security and 88 percent said immigration reform should uphold "the rule of law."

Although the two-thirds of Evangelicals said they want Congress to act on immigration reform before the end of the year, only 12 percent said their views on immigration reform were influenced by biblical principles. Evangelicals' views on immigration reform are more likely to

be influenced by relationships with immigrants (17 percent), friends and family (16 percent) and the media (16 percent), than the Bible.

"The sad part of this research on immigration is that American Evangelicals are more influenced by the media than by their Bibles and their churches combined," Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, said in a press release. "We need to turn off our TVs and open up our Bibles."

The poll did, however, that most Evangelicals are interested in learning what the Bible has to say about immigrants. Sixty-eight percent of Evangelicals say their churches and pastors has never preached about the importance of reaching out to immigrants. The same number, 68 percent, say they would "value" hearing sermons on the Bible's views on immigration.

"I was encouraged that almost seven in 10 Evangelicals wanted to hear a sermon on how Biblical principles apply to this issue. At the same time, I was discouraged that the survey also said that almost one in five hadn't heard anything from their churches or pastors," Kevin McBride, senior pastor at Raymond Baptist Church in Raymond, N.H., told reporters during a Wednesday press call announcing the poll's results.

"As Evangelicals, our final source of faith and practice is Scripture," McBride continued. "As pastors, we should be helping our churches in this area. The study sounds like I'm in the minority of pastors that have been addressing this issue. People in our churches want to know how Scripture applies to what they are seeing in the daily news and I am glad the Evangelical Immigration Table has developed tools for pastors to do this."

Although the survey indicates that the majority of churches are not speaking on immigration reform, 53 percent said they are already familiar with Bible's teachings on immigrants.

Ryan Perz, lead pastor at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Orange City, Iowa explained during the press call that he deals with undocumented illegal immigrants on a daily basis in his community and added that they are vital pieces of the local society and economy.

"Our mission as Evangelicals, we are centered around the good news of the gospel and bringing it to all people including the immigrant community. Because we believe in the eternal value of each person and that is why we also embrace and support immigration reform," Perz explained.

"As part of being a neighbor to these people, I am concerned there. As a pastor and a follower of Christ, I want to be obedient to his command to love my neighbor as myself."

"LifeWay Research backs up a lot of what I have observed," Perz added. "And that is that most Evangelicals really want to address immigration reform."

Evelyn Chaparro, Spanish pastor at The River Church in Brandon, Fla. and president of Radio Genesis in Tampa Bay, said that providing a path toward citizenship for immigrants is vital in order to provide relief to the millions of unauthorized immigrants who live their life in constant fear.

"We need to speak for those who can't and we need to advocate for immigration reform that is consistent with biblical principles," Chaparro asserted. "It is very heart wrenching to see how the current laws are affecting so many lives. Families are separated and students are afraid to have dreams because there is no potential for their future. There is really fear and insecurity and that is what dominates the lives of these people that I serve on a daily basis as well as so many other millions of people."

The Feb. 17-27 online poll only used respondents who said they were evangelical, born-again or fundamentalist Christians. Quotas were used so the sample would be representative based upon gender, ethnicity, age, region and education. The margin of error was not reported.

Also ran:

ANDERSON OBSERVER

<http://andersonobserver.com/news/2015/3/12/poll-90-of-evangelicals-say-bible-not-key-in-immigration.html>

DESERET NEWS: Evangelicals embrace immigration reform, border controls, survey says

By Mark A. Kellner

March 12, 2015

<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865624090/Evangelicals-embrace-immigration-reform-border-controls-survey-says.html>

A majority of evangelical Christians say Congress should pass immigration reform, while they are split over the economic impact of immigration and they would like to hear more about the issue over the pulpit, according to a news survey.

More than two-thirds of evangelical Christians support immigration reform and enhanced border security, [a survey conducted by LifeWay Research](#), a Nashville-based evangelical research firm, found. But evangelical approbation is not without concerns on various fronts. Although evangelicals believe the immigration issue must be resolved, they're divided on the impact of recent immigrants on the United States. Forty-eight percent of respondents said the new immigrants "are a drain on economic resources." Most of those saying this, LifeWay said, were in the 35 to the over-65 age group, roughly twice as many as the 26 percent in the 18-34 age bracket who agreed with that statement.

Evangelical pastors on the front lines concede the issue raises concerns within their congregations.

"My kids have friends in school (whose) parents may not speak English, but they are working hard," said Ryan Perz, pastor of the [Cornerstone Baptist Church](#) in Orange City, Iowa. "Unless I'm blind in my community, (immigration is) an issue."

However, Perz said there was "disagreement" in his 50-member congregation over the issue.

"Not everyone is united," he said. But Perz believes the "church is called to love people, not to legislate. We need to love the immigrants in our community and give them a path, that's what I hope the church wants to see."

Outreach opportunity

Perz spoke Wednesday the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#), a group seeking congressional action on the issue, released the results of LifeWay's survey of 1,000 self-identified American evangelicals.

Six in 10 evangelicals say Congress should establish a "path" toward either citizenship or legal status for undocumented immigrants, while 9 out of 10 say the border must be made more secure. Perhaps reflecting internal conflicts over the question, 16 percent of evangelicals said they were "uncertain" about affirming both positions.

Some evangelicals eye a religious outreach opportunity among the newcomers, with 42 percent saying they believe the number of recent immigrants offers "an opportunity to introduce them to Jesus Christ." Younger evangelicals are more outreach-minded, the survey revealed with nearly half of those 35 to 64 agreeing with the outreach idea, versus only 29 percent of those over 65.

A scant 2 percent of evangelicals said they had heard from their churches about the issue, although 68 percent said they'd value hearing a sermon on the topic. Only one in five evangelicals said they'd ever received encouragement from their congregation to interact with the immigrants in their midst.

However, 12 percent of evangelicals said their study of the Bible influenced their views on immigration, the survey indicated.

Biblical issue

Evangelical support for a path to citizenship for the undocumented falls short of the 87 percent of Americans [who told the Gallup Organization in 2013](#) they'd vote for a "multifaceted" pathway to citizenship. The 90 percent of evangelicals who want increased border security mirrors Gallup's 83 percent who agreed with that statement two years ago.

The overall evangelical support for comprehensive immigration reform is encouraging to the Rev. Gabriel Salguero, pastor of the [Lamb's Church](#) in New York City and president of the [National Latino Evangelical Coalition](#).

"Our prayer is that Congress can follow the example of this evangelical coalition and pass immigration reform this year," he said during a telephone conference call announcing the results.

Speaking with the Deseret News, Salguero said that to the evangelicals with whom he works, "this is a Matthew 25 issue, a Bible issue of how we treat the strangers. What has me tickled pink is this is a broad coalition of whites, Latinos, African-Americans and young evangelicals."

Kevin McBride, who has pastored congregations in Massachusetts, Maine and now New Hampshire, agreed with Salguero about a biblical basis for their activism.

"For me, in an ongoing thing, it's a biblical mandate to take care of the poor and the oppressed, which is throughout scripture," said McBride, who currently pastors the [Raymond Baptist Church](#). "As Christians, we're called to help."

McBride said he hopes Congress would go "back to the fundamental principles, of respect" for immigrants and their families. Today, he said, "the system works against them."

Also ran:

DAILY AMERICAN

http://www.dailyamerican.com/life/evangelicals-embrace-immigration-reform-border-controls-survey-says/article_d0879dcb-36d4-535f-b32f-450de9f5e9cc.html

NEWSOK

<http://newsok.com/evangelicals-embrace-immigration-reform-border-controls-survey-says/article/5401123>

SANTA CLARITA VALLEY SIGNAL

<http://www.signalsev.com/section/598/article/134147/>

STATESBORO HERALD

<http://www.statesboroherald.com/section/652/article/66489/>

FACTS & TRENDS MAGAZINE: Evangelicals Ready for Immigration Reform

By Bob Smietana

March 11, 2015

<http://factsandtrends.net/2015/03/11/evangelicals-to-congress-tackle-immigration/>

When it comes to immigration reform, American evangelicals appear to have high expectations, a LifeWay Research study shows.

Nine out of 10 (86 percent) want more border security. Six in 10 (61 percent) support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. More than two-thirds (68 percent) favor both. And they want Congress to take action soon.

Those are among the results of a new survey of evangelicals from Nashville-based evangelical research firm. The study, sponsored by the Evangelical Immigration Table and World Relief, found widespread support for immigration reform.

"Evangelicals are united in their desire for significant immigration reform," Scott McConnell, vice-president of Lifeway Research, said.

A number of high profile evangelical groups have promoted immigration reform in recent years, including the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Latino Evangelical Coalition. Many evangelical pastors also support reform.

A November 2014 LifeWay Research study found many pastors want a mix of justice and mercy when it comes to immigration. More than half (54 percent) support a path to citizenship. Most (91 percent) evangelical pastors also say the government should stop illegal immigration.

In the February 2015 study, researchers found similar views among all evangelicals.

Nine out of 10 (88 percent) say reform should respect the rule of law and secure the national borders (86 percent).

They also want to protect the unity of immigrant families (72 percent) and to respect people's God-given dignity (82 percent).

More than two-thirds (68 percent) of evangelicals say it is important for Congress to take action on immigration reform this year. And half (50 percent) are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports border security and citizenship.

"Evangelicals care about immigrants and want immigration reform," said Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals. "We pray for Congress to stop waiting and start legislating."

Evangelicals have some worries about immigration

Researchers found some differences by age and ethnicity among evangelicals.

Those over age 64 (84 percent) are more likely to want Congress to act than those 18 to 34 (59 percent). Those 18 to 34 are more likely (72 percent) to say reform should include a path to citizenship.

Hispanic evangelicals (79 percent) are more likely than white evangelicals (54 percent) to support a path to citizenship.

Some evangelicals are uneasy about the number of recent immigrants to the U.S., according to the survey.

Almost half (48 percent) say immigrants drain the country's economic resources.

About a quarter (22 percent) say immigrants are a threat to law and order. One in five believe immigrants threaten traditional American customs and culture.

Others evangelicals view immigration as a chance to love immigrants (40 percent) or to share Jesus with newcomers (42 percent).

Few connect faith and immigration

Few evangelicals say their faith directly shapes their views about immigration.

Researchers asked evangelicals to list which factor has most influenced their beliefs about immigration. About one in 10 (12 percent) chose the Bible, and only 2 percent named their church.

Among other influences: relationships with immigrants (17 percent), friends and family (16 percent) and the media (16 percent).

LifeWay Research also found many churches don't talk about immigration, and few take action on this issue. Two thirds of evangelicals (68 percent) say their church has never encouraged them to reach out to immigrants.

Still, evangelicals are interested in what their faith says on this topic. About half (53 percent) are familiar with the Bible's teaching about immigrants. Two-thirds (68 percent) say they'd value hearing a sermon about the Bible's views on immigration.

"The sad part of this research on immigration is that American evangelicals are more influenced by the media than by their Bibles and their churches combined," Anderson said. "We need to turn off our TVs and open up our Bibles."

Methodology: A demographically balanced online panel was used for interviewing American adults between Feb. 17-27, 2015. Quotas were used to balance gender, ethnicity, age, region and education. Respondents were screened to only include those who consider themselves an evangelical, a born-again, or a fundamentalist Christian. This report refers to these as "evangelicals." The completed sample is 1,000 surveys.

Also ran:

BAPTIST PRESS

<http://www.bpnews.net/44359/survey-evangelicals-ready-for-immigration-reform>

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/march/bible-influences-only-1-in-10-evangelicals-views-on-immigra.html>

LIFEWAY RESEARCH

<http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2015/03/11/evangelicals-say-it-is-time-for-congress-to-tackle-immigration/>

THE ECONOMIST: Even in religion, America offers more choice

March 13, 2015

<http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21646001-even-religion-america-offers-more-choice-pick-and-mix>

AS MANY AS 600,000 American Latinos “defect” from Roman Catholicism to Protestant churches each year, according to Andrew Greeley, a scholar of religion. Most join Pentecostal and evangelical churches. The journey can be stressful, concedes Jesse Miranda, a Latino Pentecostal elder statesman. Not long ago he was approached by a Hispanic congregant who had left the Catholic church a year earlier. She anxiously asked: “But where is Jesus on the cross?” Ah, in our church, Christ is risen, Mr Miranda explained.

The difference goes beyond theology, suggests Mr Miranda, who is based in Los Angeles, home to almost 5m Catholics, some 70% of whom are Hispanic. He describes a Catholic church with a reverence for suffering, linked to the deep “fatalism” of a Latin American continent conquered by the Spanish crown: “The more Latino you are, the more you carry Jesus on the cross.” Yet, he points out, migrants do not move to another country to suffer, they move for a better life. The point is made more bluntly by Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, an umbrella body for more than 40,000 Pentecostal and evangelical Latino churches in America and Puerto Rico. The Catholic church in Latin America is “an extension of the bureaucratic state”, he charges, and offers only indirect access to God through the Virgin Mary and the priesthood. Worse, Catholics are told that salvation awaits in another life—and in the meantime, blessed are the poor. In contrast, evangelical churches offer a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, leading to a blessed life here and now. “You get to America, the land of milk and honey, and you get to choose,” says Mr Rodriguez, a dapper figure in a well-cut blazer and aviator sunglasses.

Hispanic Catholics cheered the election of Pope Francis, an Argentine. The new pope has welcomed the rise of Charismatic Catholicism, which marries traditional theology with services that may include Hispanic rock music, faith-healing and in some cases speaking in tongues. But Charismatic services are merely a bridge to even more defections, declares Mr Rodriguez. “If you are involved in a Charismatic service today, in ten years’ time—inevitably—you are going to end up in one of my churches.”

The power of prayer

Surveys suggest that at least one in six Hispanic adults in America is an evangelical Protestant, meaning that this subset on its own outnumbers Jewish-Americans. Another one in six Hispanics says he has no religious affiliation. Such numbers are of keen interest to politicians as well as priests. Republicans have long seen Protestant Latinos, notably those who speak English, as likelier allies than Hispanic Catholics, who are regarded as steeped in Latin American traditions of “social justice” and sceptical of free-market capitalism.

During their presidencies, both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush wooed Mr Miranda with invitations to White House meetings and faith-based policy groups. In 2009 Mr Rodriguez was one of a group of pastors invited to pray with President Barack Obama on the morning of his inauguration, though (in keeping with his conviction that Latino evangelicals should not be owned by either party) he also delivered an opening benediction at the Republican National Convention in 2012.

Exit polls suggest that Hispanic Protestants are that rarest of political animals, a presidential swing electorate. They twice voted for Mr Clinton, then for Al Gore in 2000, then switched to the Republicans to support Mr Bush in 2004 before swinging back to Mr Obama in 2008 and 2012—mostly on the strength of his promises to bring undocumented immigrants out of the shadows. Latino evangelicals are sternly anti-abortion but want immigration reform (and are

cross with Mr Obama for doing too little), says Mr Rodriguez. They believe in government safety nets, but only on a modest scale.

On the ground, cultural differences are more obvious than any ideological divide. A Pentecostal service at the Assemblies of God Ebenezer Temple, in a gritty corner of south Los Angeles, stands out for its intensity and simplicity. Church members take turns to lead stripped-down, repetitive chants of praise, to the backing of a loud guitar band and occasional blasts on a ram's horn from a man in the congregation. Catholic services on the far side of the city, at the St Catherine of Siena church in Reseda, are not stuffy, but they do feel a bit more demanding. The readings on a recent Sunday deliver a stern message about fornication, and worshippers recite the familiar, lengthy prayers of the Mass. The church is packed with Hispanics, including scores of scampering children.

What St Catherine's offers most powerfully is a link to home for the congregation. On this particular Sunday a special evening Mass is devoted to a feast day from Guatemala, drawing a large Central American crowd in holiday mood. As old women in folk costumes dance alongside young toughs with elaborately gelled quiffs, incense swirls and babies cry in pushchairs, California seems a long way away.

But it is the America waiting outside that most worries the Catholic priests charged with keeping up the numbers. Father Ed Benioff is director of an Office of New Evangelisation for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, founded in 2013 to woo wavering worshippers, especially younger ones. He finds young Latinos steeped in impatient American dreams of individual success.

Father Ed is pinning his hopes on the example of Pope Francis, offering the millennials—the age group now in their teens to early 30s—a meaningful life by serving others. But he is only cautiously optimistic. “I couldn't care less about Protestants. That's not the enemy,” he says.

“The enemy is secularism.”

GANNETT, WLTX 19 COLUMBIA (South Carolina): Christians Talk Biblical Perspective on Immigration

By Joyce Koh, WLTX

March 12, 2015

<http://www.wltx.com/story/news/local/2015/03/12/christians-talk-immigration/70229028/>

Columbia, SC (WLTX) - Columbia International University held a pastors' conference Thursday to discuss immigration from a biblical point of view.

Matthew Soerens of Evangelical Immigration Table spoke to an audience of about 50 pastors and Christian leaders, educating them on topics like refugee resettlement and immigration reform.

Soerens said the Bible calls on Christians to welcome immigrants into their communities.

"The challenge for Christians today is how do we bring those different principles together," he said. "How do we love and welcome people, while also respecting and honoring the law? We really think that's possible."

Soerens has interacted with many churches, while being a training specialist for World Relief and a Field Director at EIT. He said deportation is an especially difficult situation for immigrant families, often leaving children in The United States without parents.

"Its a heartbreaking situation," he said. "There are tens of thousands of deportations of parents of U.S. citizens last year, and as Christians, we really believe in the unity of families.

Robert McAlister is a pastor at Riverbend Community Church in Lexington County who attended the conference.

"When people understand God's perspective on the stranger among us, on the immigrants, and the refugees and they

see that god loves the whole world, it just changes our perspective on how we view people that are coming in," McAlister said.

For more information on this, you can visit Evangelicalimmigrationtable.com and explore the South Carolina chapter.

For bible study curriculums on immigration, you can visit welcomingthe stranger.org.

IMMIGRATION AND OTHER MATTERS (Carroll Post): [Where do we go from here? – Is there any hope for comprehensive immigration reform?](#)

By Danny Carroll

March 26, 2015

<https://hispanicimmigration.wordpress.com/2015/03/26/where-do-we-go-from-here-is-there-any-hope-for-comprehensive-immigration-reform/>

For those who have been involved in efforts to encourage comprehensive immigration reform – whether within social, political, or religious networks – these last few months have been frustrating, if not discouraging.

Once again, Congress is at a stalemate. The Republicans continue with the desire to neutralize President Obama’s executive action of late November of last year or to eliminate provisions one-by-one. A U.S. district judge in Texas has placed a preliminary injunction on the implementation of that presidential order. The injunction was a response to a lawsuit brought by 26 states that is designed to overturn it as unconstitutional. The Justice Department has filed a motion with the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans to overturn the injunction. The hearing is set for April 17th. Clearly, this is all messy business, and whatever unfolds will generate yet more anger and ill will.

Humanly speaking, on the national landscape and in state legislatures there is not much that gives hope to those desiring change, both immigrants themselves and those who stand with them. Many of those who do not have legal status continue to lose trust in this country’s legal system and in its legislative and political system. Two experiences, however, have given me energy to keep working to make a difference – one grounded in faith commitments, the other focused largely on local efforts by advocacy groups.

On March 4th national evangelical leaders, who head up educational institutions, denominations, or ministries, gathered in Atlanta to ask, “Where do we go from here?” Discussions based on faith commitments and experiences from around the country reminded all those attending that there is a divine mandate that shines through whatever the sociocultural situation might project. Therein also lies the challenge. [Recent polling](#) reveals how minimal is influence of the biblical material on migration within evangelical local churches and on personal views. In other words, there is still much work to be done at the grassroots level. It is then, not only having hope, it is a question of getting back to the task of sharing what God has to say about all of this.

One week later to the day I was at a meeting called by one of the area U.S. Representatives during a recess from Washington. Although some faith leaders were present, those who spoke up more were representatives on advocacy groups, who are involved in helping immigrants with various kinds of legal advice. To watch this was a reminder again that, even though there is much to do in the nation’s capital, there are individuals and families in the here and now that need help. Again, the grassroots. In addition, it reinforced the importance of those of faith learning to work with and learning from those within the secular realm.

Where do we go from here? We move forward, trusting in the efforts on the ground with God’s help and hand-in-hand with others.

LATIN POST: Immigration Reform Update: Immigration Reform Support Strong Among Christian Evangelicals, New Poll

By Michael Oleaga

Mar 18, 2015

<http://www.latinpost.com/articles/43296/20150318/immigration-reform-update-support-strong-evangelicals.htm>

Evangelical Christians have voiced their support for immigration reform and improved border security, based on [new polling data](#).

From the 1,000 survey respondents, approximately 7 in 10 people said it is important for Congress to pass significant immigration legislation. Seven percent of respondents said new immigration legislation was "not at all" important, while nine percent were not sure.

A majority of Christian evangelicals, with 72 percent, said immigration reform should protect the unity of families, but 12 percent held a contrary belief while 16 percent were not sure. While a majority of the survey's respondents stated their support for immigration reform, 88 percent believed immigration reform legislation should respect the rule of law with 86 percent noting the bill should guarantee security on national borders.

"For years, many evangelicals have been responding to immigrants in their communities with compassion and by calling for immigration reform. What this new polling shows is widespread support for immigration reform among people in the pews," said World Relief Vice President of Advocacy and Policy Jenny Yang. "Evangelicals believe there is an urgency for Congress to reform our laws because they personally know immigrants who are affected, or they may be immigrants themselves. We hope Congress, instead of being swayed by the minority, takes up immigration reform that a majority of evangelicals across the country supports."

The numbers began to dwindle when asked about legislation providing a pathway to legal status. Nearly 6 out of 10 respondents, or 58 percent, said immigration reform legislation should create a path toward establishing a path to legal status. Twenty-four percent disagreed about providing a pathway to legal status, while 18 percent were not sure. A pathway to U.S. citizenship received more opposition from evangelicals, with 24 percent, but support also increased to 58 percent. Eighteen percent were not sure.

Most respondents did support the concept of a comprehensive immigration reform bill that includes both increased border security and a pathway to citizenship, with 68 percent in favor to 18 percent in opposition. If a presidential candidate was to support both aforementioned concepts, 50 percent of respondents admitted they were more likely to vote for that candidate, while 15 percent were less likely, but 36 percent said they were "neither more nor less likely to vote for that candidate."

"The survey results show that evangelicals are supportive of immigration reform, yet also wary about some of what that might include. Law and order seems to matter more, but families and faith issues seem to move evangelicals into the pro-immigration reform column. Considering the current political climate and the assumptions in the current political discourse, evangelicals are surprisingly open to immigration reforms," said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, the polling firm that conducted the survey.

"Hispanic evangelicals are glad the new research by LifeWay Research shows broad and diverse evangelical support for common-sense immigration reform," said Rev. Gabriel Salguero, president for the National Latino Evangelical Coalition. "Our prayer is that Congress can follow the example of this evangelical coalition and pass immigration reform this year."

The poll was conducted between Feb. 17 and Feb. 27, with quotas used to balance gender, ethnicity, age, region and education respondents.

NEWSMAX: Poll: 86 Percent of Evangelicals Want More Secure Borders

By John Blosser

March 13, 2015

<http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/poll-Evangelicals-secure-borders-path-to-citizenship/2015/03/13/id/630094/>

Most of America's evangelicals want to see a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, but even more say they want it done with secure borders, fairness to taxpayers, and according to the rule

of law.

But they are not basing their opinions on the Bible or on what they have heard in church.

A **survey by LifeWay Research**, sponsored by the Evangelical Immigration Table and World Relief, found that of nearly nine out of 10 evangelicals surveyed, or 88 percent, said they do not rely on scripture for their beliefs, and 68 percent say their churches have never encouraged them to reach out to immigrants.

While 61 percent are in favor of immigration reform leading to citizenship, 86 percent say they want greater border security and 88 percent say any immigration reform should uphold "the rule of law," the Christian Post reports.

Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, told the Christian Post, "The sad part of this research on immigration is that American evangelicals are more influenced by the media than by their Bibles and their churches combined. We need to turn off our TVs and open up our Bibles."

Most evangelicals surveyed say they have never heard preaching in their churches about immigration, yet the same number say they would "value" such sermons, while 53 percent said they were already familiar with Biblical teachings on immigration, the Christian Post noted.

LifeWay surveyed 1,000 evangelicals, which included "those who consider themselves an evangelical, a born-again, or a fundamentalist Christian," the research group noted.

Nearly half of those surveyed, or 48 percent, said they believe recent immigrants to the U.S. to be a "drain on economic resources." Sixty-nine percent believe that it is important for Congress to pass significant new immigration legislation, which 72 percent believe should "protect the unity of the immediate family."

Some 90 percent believe any immigration reform enacted should insure fairness to taxpayers.

In the survey, 22 percent expressed fears that immigrants threaten law and order, while 20 percent believe they are a threat to "traditional American customs and culture."

As might be expected, when it comes to Hispanic evangelicals, more of them, 79 percent, support a path to citizenship than do white evangelicals: 54 percent.

Evangelicals seem to want it all, the study notes, with 68 percent approving an approach to immigration which would grant a path to citizenship when combined with strengthening the borders.

In fact, half of those surveyed said they would support a presidential candidate who favored both a path to citizenship for immigrants and increased border security.

Evangelicals fall below the average American when it comes to a pathway to citizenship, with 87 percent of those surveyed by Gallup last year saying they favor a "multifaceted pathway to citizenship that includes a long waiting period, taxes and a penalty, background checks and learning English," **Gallup reported**.

The Rev. Kevin McBride, pastor of the Raymond Baptist Church in Raymond, New Hampshire, **told the Deseret News**, "For me, it's an ongoing thing. It's a biblical mandate to take care of the poor and the oppressed, which is throughout scripture. As Christians, we're called to help." Some 17 percent of evangelicals said they have been most influenced in their opinion by immigrants with whom they have interacted, followed by friends and family, the media and, finally, the Bible.

RELIGION DISPATCHES: The Battle for the Evangelical Vote

By Sarah Posner

March 16, 2015

<http://religiondispatches.org/the-battle-for-the-evangelical-vote/>

In a **new profile** of supposed evangelical kingmaker David Lane, the *New York Times*' Jason Horowitz describes Lane as "emblematic of a new generation of evangelical leaders who draw local support or exert influence through niche issues or their own networks."

“New” generation is a bit misleading; Lane, after all, has been around working the room since the 1990s. The “new” moniker is meant to distinguish him from the Pat Robertson/Jerry Falwell generation, although it’s really less of a generational difference than an organizational one. Lane, Horowitz reminds us, thrives on networks of local support, built on the dedication of individual pastors. Robertson and Falwell (and Ralph Reed, still, through his Faith and Freedom Coalition) presided over national organizations built to mobilize activists and voters at a moment’s notice. Lane seems to be [more focused](#) on involving pastors in the political process, and on provoking candidates to [pander to them](#).

But the key distinction between Lane’s efforts and the Moral Majority or Christian Coalition models is not local versus national: it’s a function of evangelical base splintering in different directions. Lane represents the pander-by-praying and extolling-the-Christian-nation wing. The other wing, as I [reported](#) last week, has tired of that routine. They’d rather hear the candidates talk about religious freedom, not offer overwrought displays of piety blended with patriotism. That’s not to understate, of course, Lane’s likely visible role in the early primary states (and, significantly, in also [helping to shape Republican opinion](#) about Israel, which is also sure to be a big campaign issue in 2016). He’s certainly a player, and perhaps even more so because of the support he has received from the [American Family Association](#), which was behind Lane-inspired efforts like [The Response](#) (hosted by then-Texas Governor Rick Perry in 2011, and this year by Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal). Horowitz reports that the AFA “pays him a retainer and provides him with legal and accounting assistance;” in return, AFA “gets its name on all of Mr. Lane’s events and adds to its database the contact information of all the pastors he organizes.” The AFA is known for its virulently [anti-gay and anti-immigrant stances](#), and not just because its ongoing affiliation with the execrable [Bryan Fischer](#). Former employees have recounted [appalling conduct](#) within the organization. On the other hand, as I [reported](#) last week, a growing number of evangelicals support immigration reform, including a path to citizenship. And many realize the futility of continuing to talk about opposition to marriage equality, hence the shift to talking about religious freedom instead. They still share opposition to same-sex marriage with the AFA. But they’ve adopted a different frame: advocating for what they claim are endangered religious freedom rights in the face of the new marriage equality reality.

No matter how dubious one might find those religious freedom claims—notably, claims for exemptions from serving same-sex marriage celebrations, and, in other contexts, covering reproductive health care in a company insurance plan—it’s a mistake to ignore how that conversation is driving the evangelical world. Will Lane’s single-minded Christian nation demagoguery carry the day with evangelical voters? Or will they be looking toward a candidate who has thus far avoided making Lane appearances but can nonetheless satisfy their religious and political concerns?

Lane has built an organization, and a reputation, aimed at creating the impression that his imprimatur is a requirement for winning the evangelical vote. In 2008, candidates who were not Mike Huckabee [complained](#) about being shut out of his pastors’ briefings. In 2012, even Ron Paul, not particularly known for religious pronouncements, sought some kind of approval from Lane, but, according to his religious advisor, Doug Wead, [wouldn’t pander](#) to what Lane wanted. Lane, according to Wead, was a Perry guy.

What did Lane produce for his candidates in 2008 and 2012? Well, not a road to victory, that’s for sure. He played a bigger role in instigating the candidates to recite their pledges to restore the Christian nation and so forth, but little else. While there are a multitude of reasons why Huckabee and Perry didn’t get their party’s nomination in 2008 and 2012, Lane’s evangelical voter mobilization certainly didn’t deliver what was necessary to win.

If that pattern repeats in 2016, we’ll likely see some of the candidates (say, Perry, Huckabee, Jindal, Ted Cruz) scrambling to get in front of Lane’s vaunted audiences of pastors. But that doesn’t mean one of those candidates will get the nomination. The next step to watch: will the

candidates who thus far have tied their fortunes to Lane feel compelled to do so, or will they be confident they can win over evangelicals without him?

OPEN BIBLE MESSAGE: What Should be Done About Immigration?

By Randall Bach

March 10, 2015

<http://www.openbiblemessage.org/index.php/what-should-be-done-about-immigration/>

Opportunity. This one word summarizes the reasons people choose to migrate to the U.S. From the time European explorers “discovered” what is now the United States through colonization, the war for independence, and the nation’s development that continues today, people have chosen to migrate here for this reason. The United States of America is a haven from persecution, a land of freedom and liberty that offers opportunity for the betterment of families, education, and economic improvement.

We are a nation of immigrants, a country created entirely by people who came from elsewhere. Even the people we call Native Americans originally came from elsewhere. If you are an American there is no question of whether or not your family immigrated here; the question is when?

Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor...

An inscription on the Statue of Liberty includes these words from an Emma Lazarus sonnet, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” To an infant nation with a vast expanse of undeveloped territory, the global masses of people desiring to escape economic deprivation and political and religious persecution were a natural fit. The USA needed them and they needed the USA.

Sofus and Anna Bach, my Danish grand-parents, were among the throngs of people who entered this nation through Ellis Island. Sofus found an opportunity to work in a blacksmith shop, and eventually became its owner. The couple raised two sons and became zealous patriots. They were proud when one son, my father, served the United States Army in the South Pacific during World War II. I am a loyal, third generation American who also delights in my Danish heritage. By the end of World War II and into the twenty-first century, the USA had become the most dominant and prosperous nation in the world. The nation’s voracious appetite for economic growth intensified its allure to immigrants looking for economic betterment and escape from political persecution. Some immigrants patiently pursued legal entrance. Many did not (the legal process for immigration is arduous, expensive, and discouragingly difficult). The lure of opportunity, fear for their lives in their home country, pressure to provide for families, and the eager readiness of American employers to offer low-paying jobs without citizenship documentation intensified the volume. Although the number of unauthorized immigrants entering this nation has stabilized, it is estimated to be between 12 and 20 million people. What should be done about this mass of people has become a major and often contentious issue. Many sincere people, including Christians, have strong views on the matter.

The Big Question

The question before the United States is what to do about these 12 to 20 million people who are not here legally. “Send them all back!” is unrealistic at this point. The estimated cost of sending all unauthorized immigrants away, even if it were possible, would be over \$250 billion. A number of the families would be torn apart because their children who were born here are U.S. citizens. Additionally many small employers, the economic backbone of the nation, would go out of business if they lost so many of their laborers. What to do?

Please allow me to challenge your thinking and, more important, your heart about this issue.

While Christians come from a range of political persuasions, we must take care that we do not first view and evaluate immigration or other issues through the eyes of a specific political party or interest group. According to a 2010 Pew Research Center poll, only 12 percent of white

evangelicals say their faith primarily influences their opinions about immigration. The vast majority are more influenced by their favorite cable news personality. This stunning revelation must grieve the Lord. “Holy Spirit, speak to our hearts!” Rather than starting with a political view about immigration, Christians need to begin with hearts of compassion and be guided by a biblical view. Politics should not hold our hearts hostage. As Pastor Rick Warren says, “A good Samaritan doesn’t stop and ask the injured person, ‘Are you legal?’”

The Bible and Foreigners

Dr. M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), distinguished professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary, emphasizes the following biblical admonitions and immigration parallels with Israel:

Migration is so central to the Bible that it provides a picture of the Christian life! 1 Peter 2:11 tells us that all Christians are sojourners, strangers in a strange land (also note Phil. 3:20; Heb. 13:14; Eph. 2:11-22). In other words, Christians are migrants on this earth. Foreigners were to have proper rest from their work like everyone else (Exod. 20:10; 23:12; Deut. 5:14) and receive a fair wage on time (Deut. 24:14-15). Law courts were to be fair and impartial to these outsiders (Deut. 1:16-17; 24:17-18; 27:19). There also were provisions for food in times of hunger (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 14:28-29; 24:19-22). Even more impressive was the command to allow foreigners to participate in Israel’s worship, the most precious part of their culture (Exod. 12:45-49; Lev. 16:29). The number and openness of Israel’s laws for foreigners is unique among all ancient law codes.

There were expectations for the outsiders, too. They would have had to learn Israel’s laws and speak the language to work and take part in the religious life of Israel (Deut. 31:8-13). The Israelites were to love foreigners as themselves, just as they were to love their neighbors as themselves (Lev. 19:18, 33-34). Their history also was a motivation to treat them well (Exod. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 24:17-18). Most important, they were to care for the foreigner, because God loves them (Deut. 10:17-19; 24:14-15).

Israel’s laws reached out to foreigners because of its history (the U.S. is a nation of immigrants!) and the heart of God. How might our laws exhibit charity towards the needy from elsewhere?

I have joined over 1,200 American Evangelical leaders in calling upon Congress and the President to implement immigration reform. ***We can’t remain where we are, yet that is where we are stuck.***

We call for a bipartisan solution to immigration that:

- Respects the God-given dignity of every person
- Protects the unity of the immediate family
- Respects the rule of law
- Guarantees secure national borders
- Ensures fairness to taxpayers
- Establishes a reasonable path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents.

A path toward legal status is ***not amnesty***, which is an offense to thousands of immigrants who complied with all of the requirements to become citizens. Many undocumented immigrants would like to become citizens but do not see any hope of legalizing their status under current law. We can create realistic pathways so undocumented immigrants can earn citizenship, beginning with the 40 percent of them who actually entered the USA legally but remained after their temporary visas expired.

Allow the Holy Spirit to sensitize and fill your heart with love for people who are living in our country fearful of deportation, separation from their children, imprisonment, and that which awaits them in their countries of origin. *They simply want for their families what you and I want.* They agonize over the fact that they are here illegally. They are usually very hard-working

people – adding to our economy instead of taking from it – asking virtually nothing from our nation while offering their labor to it at bargain rates.

You can also pray for immigrants. Ask the Lord if He wants you to provide a place of worship and fellowship for them. Please note the story about Pastor James and Shannon Banke, how they prayed for a connection with a Hispanic group. As a result, God has used them! And you can befriend and extend simple, basic kindness to people who may be undocumented, but without frightening them by asking about their legal status. [When I asked Pastor Trujillo](#) what native born Americans can do, he said, “Pray that you can see people through God’s eyes.” Our government currently remains deadlocked, unable to deal with undocumented immigrants. You and I can serve as the loving, outstretched hands of Jesus. What would Jesus do? We already know – He commanded us to ***love your neighbor as yourself*** (Luke 10:27). While political forces debate the fate of undocumented immigrants, this nation needs people who will lead by being like Jesus. Will you be one of those people? It begins in the heart, not with politics.

RELIGION DISPATCHES: Evangelicals Want Immigration Reform. Why Won’t Republicans Listen?

<http://religiondispatches.org/evangelicals-want-immigration-reform-why-wont-republicans-listen/>

Lifeway Research, which conducts surveys on evangelical attitudes on a variety of issues, released a new poll today, **finding** that a majority of evangelicals want to see Congress pass immigration reform.

The **survey**, conducted on behalf of the Evangelical Immigration Table and World Relief, the humanitarian arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, found that “more than two-thirds (68 percent) of evangelicals say it is important for Congress to take action on immigration reform this year. And half (50 percent) are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports border security and citizenship.”

The poll, which included non-white evangelicals, produced some stark contrasts, with 79 percent of Hispanic and 74 percent of African American evangelicals favoring a path to citizenship, and just 54 percent of white evangelicals supporting it. Still, it’s notable that a majority of white evangelicals favor a path to citizenship. The generational divides are also sharp, with 72 percent of respondents between the ages of 18 and 34 favoring inclusion of a path to citizenship in a reform package.

It’s always tricky to compare surveys that ask different questions, but other polls have found similar attitudes among white evangelicals, and suggest these evangelical views are consistent with the rest of the population. Public Religion Research Institute **reported** last month that roughly six in ten Americans “say the current immigration system should allow immigrants living in the country illegally a way to become citizens provided they meet certain requirements.”

While PRRI results **show white evangelical support** for Congress passing a comprehensive package is the lowest among religious groups (compared to “78 percent of the religiously unaffiliated, 76 percent of minority Protestants, 73 percent of white mainline Protestants, 72 percent of Catholics”) it, too, found a majority of white evangelicals (64%) support passage of a comprehensive package.

According to the Lifeway poll, evangelical views of immigration remain conservative, with security trumping citizenship by a fairly wide margin: nearly 86 percent said that comprehensive immigration reform should “guarantee secure national borders”—much higher than the 58 percent that said a bill should include a path to citizenship.

Yet a majority still favor a path to citizenship (also known pejoratively as “amnesty” in conservative circles). Republican politicians routinely run away from being labeled supporters of amnesty. Florida Senator Marco Rubio, who in 2013 sponsored a bill that included a path to citizenship, now he says he’s “**learned**” from that effort.

In 2013, the Evangelical Immigration Table strongly [supported](#) Rubio's effort, bringing activists to Washington to lobby members of Congress and launching a "92 Days of Prayer and Action to Pass Immigration Reform." At the time, PRRI [found](#) that a majority of white evangelicals supported an immigration package if it included compliance with legal requirements leading to a path to citizenship. That view was shared by Republicans broadly. As Republican pollster Whit Ayers [told](#) the *Washington Post's* Greg Sargent at the time, a third of Republicans support a path to citizenship, but that number jumps to two thirds if the conditions leading to citizenship "are strict and rigorous."

When a comprehensive reform package was still being discussed in 2012 and 2013, evangelicals [claimed](#) there was a major obstacle to their support: the possible inclusion of the Uniting American Families Act, which would have provided for equal treatment of gay and lesbian couples in allowing an American citizen to sponsor his or her spouse to immigrate legally. Evangelicals who said they supported immigration reform threatened to withdraw that support if the UAFAs were part of the bill. After the United States Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act in *United States v. Windsor*, though, that became a [moot point](#).

So if there's no remaining poison pill for evangelicals, why don't they, in alliance with other supporters of immigration reform, have more political clout on this issue? Despite the persistent evidence that a majority of one of the party's largest and most reliable blocs—white evangelicals—support a path to citizenship, Republican opposition to immigration reform endures.

Something in the Lifeway report made me wonder whether evangelical supporters of immigration reform have taken the wrong approach. The strategy of the Evangelical Immigration Table has been to emphasize biblical imperatives. "At the heart of why evangelical Christians believe we should love, welcome, and seek justice for immigrants is our commitment to the authority of Scripture over every aspect of our lives," [states](#) one of its documents. But the survey the Evangelical Immigration Table itself commissioned showed that evangelicals aren't necessarily motivated by those biblical imperatives when it comes to immigration, with only [12 percent](#) choosing the Bible as the factor that had most influenced their views on the issue.

The bigger influencers, it seems, are knowing immigrants (17 percent), followed by friends and family (16 percent). But even lesser influencers than the Bible were the positions of politicians, at just five percent, and of national Christian leaders at less than one percent.

Evangelical immigration advocates have tried to paint anti-reform Republicans as out of touch with the Bible. That sort of faith-based advocacy has been a staple of conservative evangelical activism on issues like abortion and LGBT rights, but hasn't worked for immigration.

That's partly due to the [divide](#) among evangelicals on the issue, which makes it harder for one side to claim biblical authority for their position, and partly to the strength of the anti-immigrant elements on the right. But if Republicans eventually do cede to the obvious changes in demographics and voter attitudes, it probably won't be for religious reasons.

RELIGION DISPATCHES: Evangelicals Looking for Walker to "Do Nothing" in 2016 Election

By Sarah Posner

March 9, 2015

<http://religiondispatches.org/evangelicals-looking-for-walker-to-do-nothing-in-2016-election/>

When speaking to religious audiences, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker likes to remind people that he goes to church and knows his Bible. These reminders frequently come as Walker seeks to distinguish himself from political opponents in Wisconsin—the ones, he claims, who've sent his family death threats and harassed his kids on Facebook; the "literally thousands of protesters outside our family home" in Wauwatosa. Some of these protesters have, according to Walker, driven past the house and given him the finger as he and his family raked leaves on a Sunday afternoon after church and before the Packers game.

Speaking in 2012 to a teleconference with activists from Ralph Reed's [Faith and Freedom Coalition](#), Walker said his faith has enabled him to rise above the "vitriol, and the constant, ongoing hatred" during the recall election he faced in the wake of his anti-union legislation, which has [crippled](#) the state's once-iconic labor movement. Along with the unmistakable contrast of his church-going family with the profane and progressive activists, Walker cited two Bible verses. He didn't recite them, but for anyone who knows their Bible—as Walker, the son of a Baptist pastor, does—the meaning was clear. The verses that helped him withstand the hatred were Romans 16:20 ("The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you") and Isaiah 54:17 ("no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.")

Should he run for president, Walker may very well turn out to be the 2016 cycle's evangelical favorite—not because he ticks off a laundry list of culture war talking points, pledges fealty to a "Christian nation," or because he's made a show of praying publicly to curry political favor. Although by no means universal, some conservative evangelicals—those who eschew the fever swamps of talk radio, yet share the same political stances of the religious right—are weary of the old style of campaigning. They're turned off by the culture war red meat, the dutiful but insincere orations of piety.

Emphasizing that ours is a "Christian nation" and pushing "hot button issues" as a style of campaigning has been detrimental to evangelicals, said Mary Jo Sharp, who teaches apologetics at Houston Baptist University and analyzes political campaigns as part of a class she teaches there. "It's very difficult to hear" that kind of rhetoric, she said. "Christians are not supposed to be the dividers."

Over the course of his political career in Wisconsin, Walker "hasn't presented as any kind of culture warrior," said Hunter Baker, Associate Professor of Political Science at Union University, a Southern Baptist school in Jackson, Tennessee. "One of the worst things that ever happened with conservative Christians," said Baker, was that they "give in to a tribal impulse," by questioning "are we getting the respect we perceive we once had, are we losing ground, we need to mobilize, we need to increase our force." That, he added, "is a losing strategy. It gives people the sense you're working from resentment."

In an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* last month, Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, [wrote](#) that in 2016 evangelicals won't be looking to candidates to "know the words to hymns," "repeat clichés about appointing Supreme Court justices who will 'interpret the law, not make the law,'" or to use "God and country" talk borrowed from a 1980s-era television evangelist.

Moore "has a good feel of the pulse of evangelicals" and "represents a wide segment" of them, said Tobin Grant, a political scientist at Southern Illinois University and blogger on religion and politics for Religion News Service. Unlike his predecessor, [Richard Land](#), known for inflaming the culture wars, Moore's "focus is more on religious and social concerns than directly political ones" and has "less interest in changing DC and more interest in keeping DC out of the way of the church," Grant said.

These evangelicals are listening for a candidate who can signal he is "one of us" without pandering. Both evangelical and Catholic candidates who have earned the culture warrior label for their strident pronouncements—Ted Cruz, Rick Santorum, or Mike Huckabee—are seen as embarrassing embodiments of stereotypes these conservative Christians would like to shed.

Instead, they are looking at a candidate like Walker, or even Jeb Bush (a Catholic), who is personally religious and, crucially, "gets" evangelical culture. Bush's Right to Rise PAC recently signed Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice, as a senior advisor—a move the Christian Broadcasting Network's David Brody [called](#) the move "a big get" for courting the evangelical vote. While Sekulow has been at the forefront of the culture wars, the ACLJ is also one of several religious right legal firms who, for

example, [brought](#) legal challenges to the Affordable Care Act's contraception coverage requirement.

Walker hits the right evangelical notes without overplaying his hand—and that's exactly the way they want him to keep it. John Mark Reynolds, professor of philosophy and provost at Houston Baptist University, said that Walker “would do well to do nothing to appeal to us. We get it. He's one of us. He sounds like one of us. He leans forward like one of us. He answers questions like one of us.”

Evangelicals, said Reynolds, “will fall out of their chairs to vote for someone who would defend them in their cultural belonging but doesn't embarrass them intellectually.”

For decades, the Republican presidential primaries have been marked by a now-predictable pattern: the candidates scramble over one another to present themselves as the most trusted ideologue, the most “authentic” Christian. In both 2008 and 2012, white evangelicals made up 26 percent of the electorate, according to [exit polling data](#), and they overwhelmingly voted Republican. In 2012, 78 percent of them voted for Mitt Romney, while in 2008, 74 percent voted for John McCain. In [two of the first three primary contests](#), they make up a majority of Republicans—56 percent of Iowa caucus-goers and 64 percent of South Carolina GOP primary voters in 2012.

As a result, despite no single figure emerging as the universal evangelical favorite in either primary election, the candidates competed to maximize their share of this crucial bloc. They tallied up endorsements from prominent pastors and religious figures and strained to be the candidate most vociferously opposed to abortion, same-sex marriage, and even, in 2012, contraception. They gave speeches at churches and evangelical universities and submitted to interviews by televangelists. To the extent that he fell short of those expectations, John McCain's 2008 selection of Sarah Palin as his running mate served to assuage evangelical doubts.

In 2011, former Texas governor Rick Perry's first campaign move was to host a [massive prayer rally](#), The Response, in Houston's Reliant Stadium, bankrolled by the *sine qua non* of the culture wars, the [American Family Association](#). This year, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal replicated that strategy—even though for Perry it apparently reaped no real electoral benefits. For Huckabee, who may well reprise his 2008 run in 2016, it meant bringing a preacher's style to the campaign trail, which he then parlayed into a lucrative deal with Fox News. In 2004, it meant preachers crisscrossing swing states like Ohio, campaigning simultaneously for George W. Bush's reelection and the state's ban on same-sex marriage.

But just three election cycles later, opposing same-sex marriage, particularly portraying it as catastrophic to the maintenance of “Christian values,” clashes profoundly with rapid and unprecedented changes in the law and cultural attitudes. Facing what many on both sides believe to be an inevitable Supreme Court decision invalidating those bans, the Republican presidential candidates are unlikely to talk about same-sex marriage directly. Ben Carson's [hasty apology](#) for his claim that homosexuality is a choice (proven, he claimed, because people go into prison straight and come out gay) is just one sign that the campaign rhetoric on this issue will be subject to a new kind of scrutiny.

Instead of talking about opposition to marriage equality, evangelical activists say, religious freedom has become the new defining mantra. Unlike marriage equality, on which white evangelicals, particularly Millennials, [are divided](#), religious freedom unifies them like no other issue but abortion.

“What will matter to evangelicals,” Moore wrote in his *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, “is how the candidate, if elected president, will articulate and defend religious-liberty rights.”

The religious liberty issue is, for evangelicals, a “four-alarm fire,” said Denny Burk, Professor of Biblical Studies at Boyce College, part of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He said evangelicals expect the candidates “to have the courage of their convictions to persuade people about what's going on.”

From the Hobby Lobby litigation to cases involving florists, bakers, and photographers refusing to provide services for same-sex ceremonies, the issue has been percolating in the evangelical community for years. In recent weeks, conservative Christians have talked and written prolifically about [Barronelle Stutzman](#), a Washington state florist found liable under the state's anti-discrimination laws for refusing to provide flowers for a long-time gay customer's wedding, and [Kelvin Cochran](#), the Atlanta fire chief fired after revelations about anti-gay comments he wrote in a book.

Congressional Republicans are listening, too; they have introduced the [Child Welfare Provider Inclusion Act](#), which would exempt faith-based providers from having to place children for foster care or adoption with same-sex couples if that conflicts with "their sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions."

Given the level of division over these issues, it's not clear that voters who aren't conservative Christians would view the change in emphasis as a tamping down of the culture wars. Legal exemptions to permit florists, caterers, social service providers, or other businesses to refuse service to LGBT people are hotly contested, both in legal circles and in the court of public opinion. In another context, the Hobby Lobby litigation, in which the Supreme Court ruled that the contraception coverage requirement under the Affordable Care Act violated a closely-held corporation's rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, was one of the most scrutinized and debated religious freedom cases in recent memory.

Evangelicals insist that they don't want special treatment in these instances; they just want "to be left alone," said Reynolds. The government should "let people live their private lives, including their businesses, and let the market determine whether they survive." (Reynolds noted, however, that he is opposed to [proposed state laws](#), championed by many religious right advocacy groups, to permit businesses to refuse service to LGBT people based on religious objections, saying such laws would be "overreaching.")

"I don't want tropes or identity politics or blowing the dog whistle and hoping everyone gathers around," said Burk. "I want to see a real vision for carrying this out." That vision, said Burk, should include pledges about judicial nominees and promises not to appoint cabinet officials who will put "any person of faith, not just Christians, in a position that's going to compromise their conscience."

"Simply throwing out some family values rhetoric won't be sufficient," said Brian Mattson, a theologian and a principal at [Dead Reckoning TV](#), a digital outlet that provides programming aimed at Millennials from a "distinctly Christian worldview." Instead, he said, the Republican conversation about religious freedom should be (and, he predicted, will be) "more substantive" about the Free Exercise Clause, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and other laws and policies.

But not all evangelicals are convinced by Moore's call for a different sort of rhetoric. Moore, said Keith Miller, an attorney who works for Hillsdale College and contributes to the evangelical blog [Mere Orthodoxy](#), "speaks for a good number of evangelicals who do want a new tone." But, he added, "I don't really think that despite the endless stories to this effect, I don't think the evangelical bloc, to the extent it is a bloc, I don't think it's changed that much."

Evangelicals likewise remain divided on immigration. While some evangelical leaders have advocated for immigration reform, including a path to citizenship, Miller said, "the evangelical on the street is closer to Rush Limbaugh on immigration." While Perry's record on immigration hurt him in 2012, his "oops" moment was probably more defining. And even though some evangelicals favor reform, they think it is unlikely that either Bush or Marco Rubio—both of whom have supported reform in the past—would make it a centerpiece of any campaign.

As for the other candidates, Chris Christie, even to conservatives, came across badly after "Bridgagate"; Reynolds described Christie as a "narcissist" who is "temperamentally unsuited to be in the White House." Huckabee, said Reynolds, "embarrasses evangelicals by fitting cultural stereotypes." Ben Carson is well-known through his 1996 book, popular with evangelicals, *Gifted*

Hands, but is, said Reynolds, “running on the Newt Gingrich plan that this is really good for my career.” While Rand Paul’s libertarianism is appealing to some evangelicals, they said, his historic position on Israel is a dealbreaker while Ted Cruz, said Reynolds, is “acerbic” and “not a nice person.”

Cruz, like Walker, is the son of a Baptist pastor, but not all evangelicals admire his speaking style or cultural cues in the same way. “I’m not impressed” with Cruz, said Mattson, adding that he speaks in a way that is “decidedly phony to me.”

In contrast, Walker speaks the right language, “but not in a polarizing way,” said Mattson. “He doesn’t sound pandering like a Huckabee and doesn’t come across as strident and divisive like Santorum. He’s winsome.”

Still, though, Walker does play a good-versus-evil hand. At last month’s Conservative Political Action Conference, he [drew criticism](#) from both liberals and conservatives for comparing protestors to the Islamic State, saying “If I can take on 100,000 protesters, I can do the same across the globe,” a comment that could be seen as a salvo in Walker’s own brand of culture war (though he [later said](#) he didn’t mean to conflate the two).

Without calling much attention to it, Walker assures evangelicals that he emerges from the same subculture and speaks their language. After CPAC, Walker spoke at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention, where he [reportedly talked](#) about how to discern whether God is calling him to a presidential run.

For Reynolds, Walker speaks “in a biblical cadence” and uses “biblical expressions,” sending cues that others in a “biblically illiterate society” might not pick up on. Although of course no one is making early predictions, Reynolds said, “I could see Scott Walker pulling this off.”

TAMPA TRIBUNE: Immigrants hear how Obama policy might benefit them

By [Elizabeth Behrman | Tribune Staff](#)

Feb. 28, 2015

<http://tbo.com/news/politics/immigrants-hear-how-obama-policy-might-benefit-them-20150228/?page=1>

TAMPA — Rep. Luis Gutierrez wants everyone who can benefit from President Obama’s new immigration policy to be ready once legal snags are worked out.

They should have a passport or birth certificate to prove their identity, and proof of their presence in the United States for the past five years, he said. They should be ready to pass a criminal background check, and prove their children were educated in this country. All of that will speed up the process so that when the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability policy wins an appeal and is implemented, they immediately will benefit from the law and be protected from deportation, Gutierrez said at a media event Saturday at the Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal Church.

“We’re not going to sit idly by and wait for the court,” he said.

DAPA, which would allow undocumented parents of children legally in the United States to remain here with their families and get work permits and Social Security cards, was created by a presidential executive action last year. It has been deterred by Republican lawmakers and others who object to its provisions and say Obama doesn’t have authority to establish such a policy.

Gutierrez stopped in Tampa this weekend as part of a national tour to educate undocumented parents about DAPA and what they need to do to benefit from it. It was his fourth stop in partnership with the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, which is helping Latino churches across the country prepare to help the millions of people who would be affected by DAPA.

The two parties were welcomed by Congresswoman Kathy Castor, a Tampa Democrat who supports the changes to immigration policy.

Tampa is a community that was built by a large immigrant population, Castor said, and its residents are proud of that history.

The new policies are important steps on the way to immigration reform, which is needed to help people living in the country illegally to find way to change that, she said.

“That’s what this is about,” Castor said. “We want to establish that pathway.”

Republicans argue that the president did not have the authority to enact DAPA. Earlier this month, a federal judge in Texas issued a temporary injunction allowing a coalition of 26 states to pursue a lawsuit to permanently stop the orders.

The Obama Administration has appealed that ruling. In the meantime, some House Republicans threatened to withhold funding for the Department of Homeland Security unless the action was reversed. Just hours before a midnight deadline Friday, legislators voted to continue funding the department for another week.

“We’re going to win that court case in the end,” Gutierrez said.

The Rev. Gabriel Salguero, president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, said his organization is on the side of whichever party does right by the 12 million people DAPA would help.

“For us, this is not a partisan issue,” he said. “This is a moral issue.”

Gutierrez’s visit attracted a crowd to the North Tampa church, where people attended a service before the information session.

The new policy is important because it would keep families together rather than separate them, Gutierrez said.

“It’s not a Latino issue,” he said. “It’s an American issue.”

THINK CHRISTIAN (Wallis Post): Jim Wallis on welcoming the stranger

By Jim Wallis

March 24, 2015

<http://thinkchristian.reframemedia.com/jim-wallis-on-welcoming-the-stranger>

Editor’s note: This is the sixth and final installment in A More Welcoming Way, a series of TC articles on the immigration experience, attempts at reform and the church’s role in the process.

For the past few years, [Sojourners](#) has been intimately involved in efforts to reform America’s broken immigration system. We took up this issue because we believe that our Christian faith compels us to struggle for a more humane immigration system as a moral imperative.

The Scriptures are very clear on this issue, as Matthew Soerens of the Evangelical Immigration Table has [already outlined](#) in this Think Christian series. This text from Matthew 25 was instrumental in converting me to my Christian faith and has converted millions of Christians to support immigration reform:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Beyond the clear Biblical imperative to welcome the stranger, at Sojourners we have felt called to struggle for comprehensive immigration reform because of the very real human costs that our broken system exacts on the “strangers” among us.

It is to Congress that Christians who believe in immigration reform must direct their witness and voices.

I recall a teary single father, who was stopped for a missing bolt on his license plate, telling us that he was being deported away from his two young daughters who were hanging on to his legs with fear in their eyes. I remember a conversation in the White House where a group of evangelical pastors were told that only criminals and drug cartel members were being deported. A pastor from Orange County raised his hand and said to the president’s top staff, “I’m sorry, but you deported Jose from my congregation, and now his son Joaquin has joined a gang.”

There were tears in his eyes. These stories go on and on in the faith community - one family after another broken apart by a broken system.

In our work to raise the voices of the millions of Christians who believe it is time to fix this system, Sojourners staff, supporters and partners have played an important role in coalitions whose breadth and diversity is unprecedented in the history of this issue. To give just two examples, we came together with a number of key evangelical organizations and leaders to form the aforementioned [Evangelical Immigration Table](#), a broad coalition advocating for immigration reform consistent with Biblical values. We have also worked closely with the National Immigration Forum's [Bibles, Badges and Business](#) network, which brings together faith leaders, law enforcement officials and business leaders to advocate for reform. Ultimately, permanent reform of our broken system can only be accomplished by an act of Congress. And so it is to Congress that Christians who believe in immigration reform must direct their witness and voices. We have won the public debate on immigration reform: 73 percent of Americans [support passing comprehensive reforms](#) to our immigration system, [including 68 percent of evangelical Christians](#). However, a minority of Republicans in the House of Representatives have so far been able to [block the reforms](#) that are needed. I believe there is still majority support for comprehensive immigration reform in both the House and the Senate. But in order for a bill to pass, congressional leaders on both sides must be convinced to put people above party and ideology. For this to happen, we must keep growing and broadening our coalition, and never give up fighting for the people among us who so desperately need our help. By focusing on [people, faces and stories](#), we can transcend and transform the politics of this issue and bring about real reform.

WASHINGTON POST: Here's what we know about the faith of Sen. Cruz, who's set to announce his 2016 bid at Liberty University

By Sarah Pulliam Bailey

March 22, 2015

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/03/22/heres-what-we-know-about-the-faith-of-sen-ted-cruz-whos-set-to-announce-his-2016-bid-at-liberty-university/>

Sen. Ted Cruz is [expected to announce](#) his bid for the White House at Liberty University, a large evangelical institution founded by the late Jerry Falwell Sr. that regularly hosts many political leaders on its campus.

Cruz, born to a Cuban refugee father and a mother from Delaware, [has joked](#) that "I'm Cuban, Irish and Italian, and yet somehow I ended up Southern Baptist."

Cruz was raised a Christian and said he became one at Clay Road Baptist Church in Houston. His [father](#), Rafael Cruz, director of Purifying Fire International ministry, is a preacher who often appears alongside his son at speaking engagements.

Cruz regularly intertwines his [faith and his politics](#). For instance, he [led a news conference](#) at his home church, Houston's First Baptist Church, to decry the mayor's move last fall to attempt to subpoena pastors' sermons.

Cruz has often discussed the central role that faith plays in his life. In a 2013 [interview](#) with CBN's "The 700 Club," a show founded by the Rev. Pat Robertson, a former GOP presidential candidate, Cruz focused on his faith.

"At the end of the day, faith is not organized religion; it's not going to a church. It is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior," Cruz told CBN News, using common evangelical lingo to talk about faith.

"I think anyone in politics you've got a special obligation to avoid being a Pharisee, to avoid ostentatiously wrapping yourself in your faith," Cruz said. "Because I think in politics, it's too easy for that to become a crutch, for that to be politically useful." The Pharisees were a Jewish sect known for strict observance of law.

Cruz is the first Latino to serve as a U.S. senator from Texas. In a [2009 interview](#) with the evangelical World magazine, he criticized the GOP's outreach to Hispanic voters, saying the

leadership proposes “Democrat Lite,” or a partial welfare state. Cruz also said that the Hispanic community is deeply conservative and committed to their faith.

Cruz departs from some evangelical leaders on the issue of immigration reform. He voted against a bipartisan bill that passed the Senate in 2013 that would give a path to citizenship to some of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S.

Some large evangelical organizations [are strong supporters](#) of [immigration reform](#), one of the few issues conservative and liberal evangelicals work together on. The Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethic and Religious Liberty Commission is part of the Evangelical Immigration Table, lending critical support to the movement for immigration reform to make a path to citizenship for immigrants if they meet certain requirements.

Though many evangelical leaders promote immigration reform, white evangelicals are the least [likely religious group](#) in the U.S. to say undocumented immigrants should be allowed to stay legally if they meet certain requirements. In other words, Cruz’s views might reflect evangelicals in the pews than he would reflect many in leadership.

Cruz is seen as the [dominant figure](#) among tea party voters and has been well received in some conservative evangelical circles. He [came in first](#) in the 2014 Values Voter Summit presidential straw poll for the second year in a row. Ben Carson came in second with 20 percent of the vote, up from 13 percent last year, while former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee came in third with 12 percent.

Cruz has made some polarizing moves even within evangelical circles. After he said that “Christians have no greater ally than Israel,” Cruz [was heckled](#) off the stage at a September gala to raise awareness about beleaguered Mideast Christians. The episode [highlighted](#) a central tension between American evangelicals, who strongly support Israel, and Middle Eastern Christians, who criticize Israel for expropriating Arab lands.

He has been a controversial figure since he entered the U.S. Senate after winning in the 2012 elections. He persuaded Republicans in September 2013 not to fund the government unless President Obama’s health-care law was defunded, leading to a 16-day government shutdown. He has called for the shutdown of Common Core, a [lightning-rod issue](#) even for conservative evangelicals.

Cruz recently [turned his attention to local D.C. politics](#) by introducing a measure in Congress to [upend a new city law regarding discrimination over reproductive health decisions](#) and another to keep [religiously affiliated colleges in the nation’s capital](#) from having to fund gay and lesbian student groups.

Cruz attended high school at Faith West Academy in Katy, Tex., and later graduated from Second Baptist High School in Houston.

Liberty, based in Lynchburg, Va., [prides itself](#) on being the largest private, nonprofit university in the country, the largest university in Virginia and the largest Christian university in the world. Liberty’s annual graduation ceremony has become a sought-after stage for Republican candidates seeking to build bridges to Christian conservatives.

In 2006, Sen. John McCain used a speech at Liberty to patch over old wounds from his labeling of Falwell as an “agent of intolerance” during the 2000 campaign. Last year’s commencement address [was given](#) by Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal.

Liberty is considered to be more conservative politically and socially among evangelical institutions. Students must adhere to a 20-page honor code, including rules that prevent them from watching R-rated movies, gambling or attending dances. The school is flush with cash and has [immense athletic ambitions](#).

WASHINGTON POST (Sargent Post): Ted Cruz’s pitch to evangelicals has a hole in it

By Greg Sargent
March 24, 2015

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2015/03/24/ted-cruzs-pitch-to-evangelicals-has-a-hole-in-it/>

Senator Ted Cruz's presidential run is premised on the idea that, by speaking to the "values" of evangelical voters, he can mobilize them in numbers not seen in a very long time. "Imagine instead millions of people of faith all across America coming out to the polls and voting our values," Cruz [said yesterday](#), adding that these voters had been "staying home."

Cruz's decision to announce his run at Liberty University [is itself a sign that he hopes to assume the mantle of leading evangelical champion](#). And as [Jon Ward puts it](#), Cruz's announcement was "an attempt to lay down a marker with American evangelicals, to claim that he is their guy."

So here's something worth watching: How will the GOP primary debate over immigration reform, in particular, play among these voters?

One basic fact about immigration reform that continues to get lost in the noise is that evangelical Christians support it. Religion writer Sarah Posner [recently reported on polling](#) showing that a majority of evangelicals want Congress to pass immigration reform and support a path to citizenship. Evangelical leaders played a major (if largely ignored) role in the failed push for reform last year.

I don't pretend to have any insights into what motivates evangelical voters. But listen to those who do: As [evangelical writer Jim Wallis has put it](#), evangelical Christians have long pushed for reform on the grounds that the status quo is immoral, and that we should welcome the "biblical stranger" among us who is merely trying to find a better life. Wallis seems to be liberal, but Posner [points out](#) that many evangelical leaders have advocated for reform on the basis of "biblical imperatives" that require us to "seek justice for immigrants," though it's not clear whether that message explains why many rank and file evangelicals do support reform.

Cruz has staked out one of the most aggressive anti-reform postures of any high-profile Republican. While he doesn't flirt with nativism of the Steve King variety, his national renown rests in no small part on his nonstop railing against "amnesty." He has made rolling back Obama's executive action shielding DREAMers from deportation a "[top priority](#)" for years. He was [at the forefront of efforts](#) to use Homeland Security funding as leverage against Obama's more recent actions expanding protection from deportation to the parents of children who are U.S. citizens and legal residents.

It's true that opposing Obama's executive actions is not necessarily the equivalent of opposing comprehensive reform. But Cruz [opposed the DREAM Act](#), a legislative path to legalization for DREAMers, and he has [rejected the idea](#) that Republicans need to be for a comprehensive immigration overhaul. The GOP-aligned Wall Street Journal [bluntly criticizes](#) Cruz's "hard-edged message against immigration."

Meanwhile, Mike Huckabee — who knows a little something about appealing to evangelicals — discusses these issues in a decidedly different way from Cruz. Huckabee would certainly denounce Obama's executive actions, but he also advocates for a path to citizenship for the DREAMers in moral terms, claiming it would be wrong to punish kids for the actions of their parents, and that we should strive to create a way for DREAMers to achieve full participation in American society. Rebecca Berg [recently reported on an event](#) where Huckabee made this case to Christian voters, challenging them *not* to vote for him if they disagreed with his moral convictions — and was applauded for it.

It's unclear whether Huckabee will run for president. But it would be welcome if he challenged Cruz's claim on evangelicals by making a morally nuanced case about the plight of illegal immigrants — one that evangelicals appear open to hearing. (Tellingly, [Huckabee adviser Hogan Gidley says](#) supporting citizenship might not be disqualifying among GOP primary voters.) Jeb Bush, too, has [talked in a morally nuanced way](#) about the plight of illegal immigrants and has [even suggested](#) they might have something positive to contribute to American society (though he [converted to Catholicism long ago](#), and may not be the perfect messenger to deliver this message to evangelicals).

Look, maybe support for immigration reform is skin deep among evangelicals. Maybe Cruz can appeal to them by [vowing to keep up the crusade against gay marriage until the end of time](#) and, generally, staking out a [more culturally confrontational position than any other candidate](#). Maybe it's true, as many have insisted, that support for "amnesty" of any kind is lethal among GOP primary voters. But I hope that isn't true, and it would be nice to see it put to the test. Cruz's claim of a direct line to the hearts and minds of evangelicals — even as he stridently opposes immigration reform — would be one place to start.

NOTIMEX: Evangelicos apoyan reforma migratoria integral en EU

11 de marzo de 2015

<http://www.oem.com.mx/eloccidental/notas/n3735051.htm>

Washington, D.C.- La mayoría de los evangélicos en Estados Unidos apoyan una reforma migratoria que incluya una vía para que los indocumentados alcancen la ciudadanía, reveló un sondeo.

La consulta de la coalición Evangelican Immigration Table, realizada por World Relief, reveló que el 86 por ciento de los encuestados se pronunció por una frontera más segura, mientras que un 60 por ciento apoyó la vía para la ciudadanía de los inmigrantes en Estados Unidos.

"Los evangélicos cristianos apoyan que el Congreso pase una amplia reforma migratoria y eso incluye seguridad en la frontera y la oportunidad de obtener un estatus legal y la ciudadanía", afirmó en rueda de prensa el presidente de la Coalición Nacional de Evangélicos Latinos, Gabriel Salguero.

Más de siete de cada 10 evangélicos consideró importante que el Congreso apruebe la reforma migratoria en 2015.

El 72 por ciento se pronunció a favor de que proteger la unidad de las familias, y más de ocho de cada 10 señaló la importancia "al respeto a la dignidad de la gente otorgada por Dios".

La encuesta también mostró que el 50 por ciento de los evangélicos expresó que daría su voto con mayor probabilidad a un candidato que respalde tanto la seguridad en la frontera como la ciudadanía a los inmigrantes.

El director de investigación de Life Way, Ed Stetzer, destacó que en el actual ambiente político la oposición a la reforma migratoria viene del lado más conservador del espectro ideológico.

Sin embargo, señaló que cuando se les pregunta a los evangélicos por temas específicos, están "sorprendentemente abiertos a la idea de una reforma migratoria integral".

La postura sobre la ciudadanía desafía la negativa de los republicanos en el Congreso, a quienes por tradición respaldan en las urnas.

Al ser cuestionados sobre cómo esperan resolver esa diferencia, la vicepresidenta de Activismo y Política de World Relief, Jenny Yang, indicó que la mayoría de los evangélicos ven que el Congreso tiene la posibilidad de actuar este año.

Apuntó que los encuestados mostraron su "frustración" porque no se ha concretado la reforma al sistema migratorio y agregó que el sondeo recoge las opiniones de los evangélicos en general, no la de aquellos líderes cuyas posturas conservadoras son públicas.

La encuesta fue aplicada a mil personas que se identificaron como evangélicos, mormones o cristianos fundamentalistas, entre el 17 y el 27 de febrero pasado.

APRIL:

AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN: Pastor Tim Moore of Walk Worthy Baptist Church in Round Rock talks about immigration [VIDEO]

April 14, 2015

<http://m.statesman.com/videos/news/pastor-tim-moore/vDPQ3Q/>

AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN: Dream on: Little chance of bill to end in-state tuition reaching Abbott's desk

By Jonathan Tilove

April 14, 2015

<http://politics.blog.statesman.com/2015/04/14/dream-on-little-chance-of-bill-to-end-in-state-tuition-reaching-abbotts-desk/>

Good morning Austin:

Tim Moore, the white, 62-year-old senior pastor of Austin's Walk Worthy Baptist Church, stood on the south steps of the Capitol as part of a press conference and rally sponsored by the Coalition to Save In-State Tuition yesterday, and proclaimed his support for maintaining in-state tuition rates at Texas colleges and universities for unauthorized immigrants who meet certain residency and other requirements.

As a pastor, I don't think there's any person of faith – and I think most of the people in this building profess to be people of faith – and as a faith advocate in this state I am here to tell you that I am conservative, I am a Republican, I am a little “t” tea party member, I come from a conservative point of view, but I will understand the need of good people of conscience and people of faith to willingly make a sacrifice for the good of their neighbor. The Bible says in Leviticus ... the Lord is talking to just his people, and he said, “Remember that you were in bondage in Egypt, in Babylon, but you are to treat those immigrants, aliens, sojourners among you, the immigrants among you, as though they were native born.”

The *Dreamers* – as those who have benefited from the in-state tuition provision have come to be known – are deserving of that treatment, Moore said, and Texas, its economy and its everlasting soul, are the greatest beneficiaries.

Said Moore:

It's hard to stand here and say that everything conservatives do is something I support. I'm more inclined to tell you that my brand of conservatism, if I'm still that, is more in line with the conservatism of 2001 than the conservatism of 2015, and I've always believed that the strength of conservatism in this state is that good people who may come to different conclusions have the ability to know the value of those things that need to be conserved. In-state tuition is worthy of being conserved.

With their compelling personal stories, the *Dreamers* have proved their own best advocates in the campaign to maintain in-state tuition. But folks like Moore and Bill Hammond – the CEO of the Texas Association of Business, who also participated in yesterday's midday press conference – play a critical role as bulwarks and symbols of what was once a practical conservative consensus behind a policy that has, of late, fallen victim to rising tea party passions on the issue of immigration.

“This is a sound policy,” Hammond said. “It would be a cruel tragedy if this were to be repealed.”

He said that he thought that the *Dreamers* were bearing the brunt of frustration with the failure of Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform, to bring form and order to national immigration policy.

“It's red meat, it's just red meat,” Moore said afterward. “It's, ‘You leave, you're not one of us.’”

“It denies this time of history and it denies the minority majority that's coming,” he said.

“Conservatism is being redefined,” Moore said afterward. “I want to be principled.”

On the practical politics of it, said said, “We believe we're one vote short of killing this thing in the Senate. We've got all the Democrats. We need two Republicans.”

The one they have on the record is Sen. Kevin Eltife, R-Tyler, who has said that repealing the law would be “punishing the wrong people.”

“We need two, we've got one,” Moore said. Of the prospect of finding that second Senate Republican, he said, “Let me just tell you the sun is bright, it's looking good, we've got no storm clouds. We believe there is a (second) reasonable Republican that doesn't like the taste of this.”

“But the lieutenant governor pledged and ran on this and has got that closed-door, arm-twisting ability,” Moore said.

The 2001 law was passed nearly unanimously by the Texas Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Rick Perry.

But the public has in recent years grown deeply divided over the provision.

Here from [Ross Ramsey](#) on how it fared in the most recent, February 2015, University of Texas/Texas Tribune poll.

In-state tuition for undocumented immigrants continues to split Texas voters on decidedly partisan lines, according to the latest University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll.

Under current state law, undocumented immigrants pay in-state tuition at state colleges and universities if they have lived in the state for three years, graduated from Texas high schools, applied for U.S. citizenship and have the grades and scores to win admission to those schools. Overall, it looks like the electorate is deadlocked on that policy, with 42 percent saying those students should continue to pay lower in-state tuition and 43 percent saying they should pay higher out-of-state rates.

The partisan differences, however, are striking: 67 percent of Democrats think the students should pay in-state rates; 75 percent of Tea Party Republicans think they should pay out-of-state rates; and non-Tea Party Republicans fall in between, with 51 percent saying the students should pay out-of-state rates and 35 percent saying in-state tuition should apply. Moore pointed to a recent survey by LifeWay Research in Nashville that, while it didn't ask about the in-state tuition question, showed growing evangelical support for immigration reform, including a path to citizenship, a term which has been a trip-wire for conservative concerns.

From [LifeWay](#):

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— When it comes to immigration reform, American evangelicals want it all. Nine out of 10 (86 percent) want more border security. Six in 10 (61 percent) support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. More than two-thirds (68 percent) favor both. And they want Congress to take action soon.

Those are among the results of a new survey of evangelicals from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. The study, sponsored by the Evangelical Immigration Table and World Relief, found widespread support for immigration reform.

“Evangelicals are united in their desire for significant immigration reform,” says Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research.

A number of high profile evangelical groups have promoted immigration reform in recent years, including the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Latino Evangelical Coalition. Many evangelical pastors also support reform.

A November 2014 LifeWay Research study found many pastors want a mix of justice and mercy when it comes to immigration. More than half (54 percent) support a path to citizenship. Most (91 percent) evangelical pastors also say the government should stop illegal immigration.

In the February 2015 study, researchers found similar views among all evangelicals.

Nine out of 10 (88 percent) say reform should respect the rule of law and secure the national borders (86 percent).

They also want to protect the unity of immigrant families (72 percent) and to respect people's God-given dignity (82 percent).

More than two-thirds (68 percent) of evangelicals say it is important for Congress to take action on immigration reform this year. And half (50 percent) are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports border security and citizenship.

“Evangelicals care about immigrants and want immigration reform,” says Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals. “We pray for Congress to stop waiting and start legislating.”

Perry, meanwhile, appears to be backing off his strong past support for the measure as he prepares for another run for president. While his last bid for president is best remembered for the “Oops” moment at a Republican debate that is generally thought to have sounded the death knell for that campaign, it can be argued that he was done for from the moment, at an earlier debate, that he defended the in-state tuition policy, suggesting that those who would deny those young people that opportunity “did not have a heart.”

From a recent story from the *Texas Tribune*'s [Patrick Svitek](#):

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Former Gov. Rick Perry, whose support for Texas' in-state tuition law has drawn conservative criticism and complicated his failed 2012 presidential campaign, offered a less than forceful defense of the measure Tuesday, largely deferring to state lawmakers who are considering a repeal.

“I’m not the governor anymore,” Perry told reporters before a business roundtable at the Central Electric Power Cooperative. The Legislature, he added, “will make a call on whether this is right for Texas or not, but here’s what I’m not going to change on, here’s what I’m not going to back up from, and that is to continue to call for the federal government to do its constitutional duty and secure that border.”

Perry’s remarks came hours after a Texas Senate subcommittee advanced a bill to undo the law, which offers in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants who wish to attend public colleges and universities in the state. Perry has provided varying defenses of the statute since it emerged as an issue in his unsuccessful bid for the White House in 2012, more recently suggesting the reasons legislators backed it in 2001 still resonate today.

“We were hoping to look to Rick Perry as our voice of reason. He signed in-state tuition into law and when it was being debated (in the 2012 presidential campaign) he stood firmly behind it,” Ramiro Luna, the director of community affairs for the Keep HB 1403 campaign, said after yesterday’s rally.

“Right now is the time we need him to stand firmly behind it,” said Luna, 30, who came to the U.S. when he was seven and benefited from the law by being able to afford to attend the University of North Texas at Dallas. “The fact that he’s been mute is disappointing to us.”

When he ran for governor, Greg Abbott’s campaign did not seek to make the policy an issue, but, when pressed, said in-state tuition was a “flawed” policy that could stand to be improved, and that he would sign repeal legislation if it reached his desk as governor.

“We’re going to fight to make sure it doesn’t get to his desk,” Luna said. “I’m afraid of the governor if it gets to him. We want to keep it away from him.”

Meanwhile, he said, in the House, Speaker Joe Straus is a “great ally.”

“Right now the Republican Party is a little bit torn,” Luna said. “They don’t want to pass this legislation but some of them feel they have to pass it to appease the extreme right. So there is this conflict. If we are able to create this gap between the moderate Republicans and the extremists – this is not legislation that you want to give that much attention to – we can deal it a slow death, that’s what we’re hoping for.”

I talked to Rice University political scientist Mark Jones yesterday, and he said that’s the likeliest outcome.

“Anybody who’s thinking about the future of the Texas Republican Party or winning swing seats or swing counties in 2016 doesn’t want to see this on the governor’s desk. There’s really no positive outcome. It’s all negative and there’s virtually no positive,” Jones said.

The idea of reforming the program, as suggested by Abbott during the campaign, would not satisfy anyone on either side of the issue, he said.

“There’s really no advantage to a narrowly tailored revision of the in-state tuition law that requires people to do everything possible to apply for citizenship and then follows up, because the reality is everyone is doing that anyway,” Jones said. “I think you would be hard pressed to find anything but a handful of the beneficiaries of in-state tuition legislation who don’t want to become American citizens.”

“All it can do is open up a Pandora’s Box once it gets to the floor and needlessly antagonize Hispanics without providing what the Republican base really wants, which is the repeal of in-state tuition, not some cosmetic modification.”

Ultimately, Jones said, it is in Abbott’s best interest to see the bill never reaches his desk.

“I think if you’re Greg Abbott you don’t want to be forced to make that decision. That’s a decision that Abbott’s people have to keep him from having to make. From Abbott’s perspective it would be very damaging to have an in-state tuition repeal on his desk and be forced to either sign it or veto it.”

Jones said he didn’t know about Moore’s prediction that defenders of the law would be able to pick up a second Senate vote. (The most likely second Republican, he said, would be Sen. Kel Seliger of Amarillo.)

“The reality is there may be votes in the Senate to block it, or maybe not, but I don’t see any way in-state tuition legislation gets out of the House. That’s legislation that divides the Straus coalition at its core. Actually, it doesn’t even really divide it. The Democrats are 100 percent against it and most centrist and pragmatic Republicans are against it. So really it’s a piece of legislation that already has a majority of Texas House members opposing it.”

“The problem in the House, from Straus’s perspective, is that it’s an issue that will galvanize the conservative base and really pit the various wings of the Republican party against themselves. That’s a losing issue for Joe Straus if it comes to the floor because it needlessly puts Straus-aligned Republicans either at odds with the speaker or at odds with the Republican primary base.”

The answer, Jones said: “Run the clock out.”

But, Jones said, Straus and Abbott would undoubtedly “prefer that it never come out of the Senate.”

“If they still had the two-thirds rule they could blame the Democrats,” he said. “Alas, it no longer exists and either the in-state tuition bill is going to pass the Senate or two Republicans are going to have to step out in front of it.”

After yesterday’s rally, I walked around to the north side of the Capitol where there was a rally by advocates for lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender rights against nearly two dozen bills that have been filed that they say would jeopardize those rights, including constitutional amendments that, they say, would, in the name of expanding religious freedom, provide a license for discrimination.

“We will not allow these bills to pass,” Rep. Mary González, D-El Paso, told the rally, to a shouted “Amen.”

As in the cases of the *Dreamers*, González told the activists who were going to spend the day visiting legislators’ offices, “personal stories are important to the political process. When we humanize policy, we create good policy.”

“We have to put ourselves at the foreground. We have to use our stories to makes sure these bills don’t get through,” she said. “Thank you for being here and thank you for being brave. If you need anything or anyone’s mean to you, you can come to my office.”

There was a synchronicity between the two rallies – and the two causes – yesterday.

In addition to the personal stories, in both cases the argument is being made by Hammond, and others, that there would be an economic cost to Texas for either repealing in-state tuition or enacting the new constitutional amendment.

And, Jones said, the precedent set by the extraordinary backlash against Indiana enacting similar legislation, has killed any small chance those “religious freedom” measures might have had in Texas.

“I think the Indiana experience is effectively going to cause Republicans throughout the country to the shelve similar legislation. The learning experience of everything that (Indiana Gov.) Mike Pence and Indiana Republicans have gone through – the local, national and international backlash they’ve seen – is sufficiently strong that I don’t think you’re going to see too many

Republican legislatures throughout the country passing similar legislation, in part because I think the LGBT movement has effectively framed that legislation as discriminatory. The actual content of the legislation doesn't really matter any more. It could be identical to legislation passed five years ago or ten years ago, but symbolically, it's seen by a large number of political actors and corporations and the media as being discriminatory. They've effectively won the battle."

Like repealing in-state tuition, enacting the "religious freedom" amendment was an issue important to the Republican primary base and one that Patrick campaigned on.

But, Jones said, "in the post-Indiana frame, the context now is very different than the context even as close back as early March."

A constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds vote in both chambers to place it on the ballot.

"There's no way on earth it's going to get a two-thirds vote of the House," Jones said. "It was probably dead in the water from the very first day of the session, but any lingering hope by the legislation's supporters, those were eliminated after the blow up in Indiana."

BLOOMBERG: Here's the Hispanic Evangelical Pastor Leading His Flock to Jeb Bush

By Michael C. Bender

April 29, 2015

<http://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-04-29/here-s-the-hispanic-evangelical-pastor-leading-his-flock-to-jeb-bush>

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush is in Houston, Texas, on Wednesday to deliver the keynote address to the annual meeting of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, a group started by Reverend Samuel Rodriguez and one that counts 40,200 member churches across the country. Rodriguez, 45, is the pastor at New Season Christian Christian Worship Center in Sacramento, Ca., and has spent more than a decade prodding Republican lawmakers in Congress to provide a path to citizenship to the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country.

In an interview ahead of the annual meeting, Rodriguez described himself as profoundly disappointed in the path Republican leaders recently have taken in Washington. Yet he remains hopeful in Bush's candidacy.

Bloomberg: When I think of evangelical voters and nominating a Republican president, I think of Iowa, not Houston. Can Hispanic evangelicals make a difference in picking the Republican presidential contest?

"This time around, in 2016, I would say you will not hear talk about self-deportation."

Rodriguez: Hispanic evangelicals aren't necessarily caucus voters in Iowa, but if you do your due diligence with Pew, you'll see we vote, on average, more than other segments of the Hispanic electorate. Even the Cuban American community is shifting now from a generational perspective. There are about 16 million Hispanic evangelicals in the U.S. and it is a very staunch socially conservative constituency.

Bloomberg: Just 27 percent of Hispanics voted for the Republican nominee in 2012. How staunchly conservative are we talking here?

Rodriguez: Even with Romney, Hispanic evangelicals were very faithful to the conservative cause. Even with the self-deportation rhetoric, all that was taking place on immigration, Hispanic evangelicals said, 'We hate this stuff on immigration, yet the Republican Party truly resonates with us a bit more on traditional values than the Democratic Party.' That offers a great opportunity in 2016, if Republicans can get it right.

Bloomberg: So if not in Iowa, where are these evangelicals voting?

Rodriguez: The hotspots would be, in order, Texas, California and Florida. Nevada is one of our fastest growing chapters in the country, as is Colorado.

Bloomberg: And how is the immigration issue playing out now among Hispanic evangelicals?

Rodriguez: Republicans are alienating Latino Christian conservatives. The Republican Party has to figure out if short-term viability trumps long-term sustainability. This time around, in 2016, I would say you will not hear talk about self-deportation. Period. I would say—if I were a betting man, which I'm not—I would predict that the Republican establishment will make sure that immigration is contextualized in a way of, 'We are pro-immigration, we want to secure our borders. But we likewise want to secure our values, values that include compassion and a Judeo-Christian value system that compels us to address the issue of immigrants.' I think you'll hear that balance and nuance. And if not, they're going to end up with 27 percent again.

Bloomberg: That's quite a prediction, considering House Republicans essentially voted last year to deport children of undocumented workers, and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker is now suggesting limits on legal immigration.

Rodriguez: I can tell you where I see hope. I see hope in the candidacy of Governor Jeb Bush. I think Governor Bush gets it. He's not pro-amnesty, but he knows we have to find a solution to the immigration issue in America. I have a great respect, an admiration toward Governor Bush for his exemplary leadership in Florida. His multi-ethnic outreach in Florida was really amazing, and you saw the results in his Latino support base. He was able to transcend the stereotypical Republican motif. We've communicated and worked together over the years, but I have yet to physically shake his hand. I look forward to having him keynote our convention.

Bloomberg: Anyone else?

Rodriguez: I know that Senator Marco Rubio has retracted his support of the Senate immigration bill. I was actually standing to the right of Senator Rubio when they went over the points in that Senate press conference. I was there. Literally, I was standing there. I was actually nodding off because I took the red eye, but that's a story for another day. But I do believe in his heart of hearts that Senator Rubio knows we have to find a solution. Right now what he's advocating for is a border solution, and then we'll talk about immigration reform. I do believe that if Senator Rubio is the presidential nominee for the Republican Party, we'll take some positive steps toward immigration reform. Bush and Rubio, and even Governor Mike Huckabee, I mention these because they have a strong Judeo-Christian ethos.

And there are candidates who are less attractive to those of us. And I say this respectfully, because they're all wonderful gentlemen, but the candidates who are less attractive to issues of immigration would be Senator Ted Cruz and Governor Scott Walker. These two candidates right now would be at the bottom of the scale when it comes to attracting Hispanic evangelicals because of their stance on immigration.

Bloomberg: What are the Judeo-Christian values when it comes to immigration?

Rodriguez: We have a biblical mandate to address the immigrants in our community. And it's not by spitting at them when they're on a bus. These are human beings created in the image of God. Leviticus 19 is explicit: Treat the immigrants in your community as one of your own. Do not forget that you were once immigrants. Likewise, Matthew 24 says here's how the Lord measures your true Christian faith. He'll know by your actions, including whether or not you welcome the immigrant, welcome the stranger. It's right there. It means we need to solve this in a way that reconciles both the law and our Christian compassion.

Bloomberg: That's going to sound like amnesty to a lot of Republican primary voters.

Rodriguez: We are not, as a group, in favor of amnesty. We're in favor of protecting our border, securing our border. And I argue we have the technology. If we can read a license plate in Afghanistan miles away through a satellite, I think we can see 100 people with backpacks crossing the Rio Grande. The fact that we haven't done it isn't a matter of resource allocation. It's a matter of sheer will.

We need to deport the murderers and gangbangers that are here to hurt our communities. But the vast majority of people here in an undocumented manner did not cross the Rio Grande with backpacks. They came in here with legal visas and overstayed their visas. That bureaucracy has

to be addressed. I have them in my church. I don't deny that. These are great people who work hard. They work hard, and it requires us to do more than deport someone who has been here for 20 years, whose kids were born here.

Bloomberg: But some Republicans say even that's amnesty.

Rodriguez: That's not amnesty. Amnesty is, 'You're here? Hallelujah, you're here! No problem. You're automatically a citizen.' That's not what I'm asking for. If you've been here for 20 years, and you're not dependent on welfare, and you're kids were born here, and you've been paying taxes, then go to the back of the line—the very back of the line. Admit you came here illegally, learn English, and get to the back of the line. But we won't deport you as long as you keep working, and government dependency is not an option.

Bloomberg: How would you describe the direction the Republican Party has taken on immigration in the last few years?

Rodriguez: The word disappointment wouldn't capture my sentiment. It's beyond disappointment. With humility, if Republicans continue on this path this time around, silence will not be an option on my end. Republicans must cross the Jordan of immigration reform in order to step into the promised land of the Latino electorate. Almost half of this constituency voted for George W. Bush in 2004. This is not the African American vote that is locked in 90 percent Democrat. This is the quintessential, independent electorate of the first half of the 21st century. There is no more fluid electorate than the Latino electorate. The Latino electorate is up for grabs.

BUSINESS INSIDER: Jeb Bush just made his most direct pitch to evangelicals

By Leslie Larson

April 29, 2015

<http://m.stamfordadvocate.com/technology/businessinsider/article/Jeb-Bush-just-made-his-most-direct-pitch-to-6232119.php>

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush (R) used some of his boldest religious language yet this year in his speech Wednesday to the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference in Houston, Texas.

In light of the spiritually laden messages coming from some other Republican presidential contenders, Bush has been comparatively less vocal about his personal faith.

But in his speech of Wednesday, Bush delved into his spiritual journey, calling it "one of the most important times of my life, the conversion to the faith of my wife."

Bush converted to Catholicism in 1994, after his defeat in the Florida gubernatorial race.

"When I joined the church, like millions before me and millions who will come after me, I discovered in Christ the grace to do the Lord's work," he told the crowd, praising the powerful and liberating influence of "Christian conscience in action."

"In America today it is important to respect and to protect Christians acting on their faith, not just talking about their faith but there is a constitutional right and more importantly, for a loving society Christians need to have the space to be able to act on their conscience," he added, comments timed just one day after the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the constitutional right of states to ban gay marriage.

Bush switched back and forth between English and Spanish in his remarks to the Texas crowd, that included his parents, former President George H.W. Bush and former First Lady Barbara Bush.

Gov. Bush admitted he was "very intimidated" to speak before the pair.

On Tuesday, he traveled to Puerto Rico for a series of town hall style events and in his remarks on Wednesday, he highlighted the importance of upward mobility for all in the U.S. "no matter where you come from."

"It doesn't matter if you have a vowel at the end of your name ... every American, every person in this country has the right to rise up."

Bush also stressed his belief in the need for immigration reform: "we have to fix a broken immigration system and do it in short order."

"It also means dealing with the 11 million undocumented workers that are here in this country, 11 million people that should come out from the shadows and receive earned legal status. This country does not do well when people lurk in the shadows," he said, prompting applause.

"This country does spectacularly well when everybody can pursue their God-given abilities."

At the conclusion of his remarks, Samuel Rodriguez, Jr., head of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, took the stage and led the crowd in a prayer for Bush.

"You are a very important person. We do not know what God has for you, it could be something very significant in regard to the nations of our nation only God knows," Rodriguez told him.

"The looming presence of my mother will make it hard," he joked.

Wednesday marked Bush's second major outreach to the Hispanic community this week.

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush (R) used some of his boldest religious language yet this year in his speech Wednesday to the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference in Houston, Texas.

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BUZZFEED: Jeb Bush Tells Hispanic Evangelicals He Supports Earned Legal Status For Undocumented Immigrants

By [Adrian Carrasquillo](#)

April 29, 2015

http://www.buzzfeed.com/adriancarrasquillo/jeb-bush-hispanic-evangelicals?utm_term=.eeq5lwJnK#.oern4PG1X

HOUSTON — Jeb Bush said undocumented workers should be able to come out of the shadows, pay a fine, work, and eventually gain earned legal status in a speech to a major Hispanic evangelical organization Wednesday.

Speaking to the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) with his parents George H.W. and Barbara Bush in the audience, the former Florida governor focused on his work in education in the state — but got big applause for talking about immigration and Israel.

"We have to fix the broken immigration system and that means controlling the border and making sure legal immigration is easier than illegal," he said. "But it also means dealing with 11 million undocumented workers... where they pay a fine, they work, they do what they want to do which is come out of the shadows, provide for their families and over a period of time get earned legal status."

Bush knew his audience — education is always a top issue for Latinos in the U.S. and NHCLC does much of its work in education and immigration — as he connected his experience working on education in Florida with the state's current success with Hispanic students.

He spoke of visiting 250 schools when he ran for governor the second time, and stressed his work to raise standards for students and enact a corporate tax-voucher program. He credited this work with growing the Hispanic graduation rate from 47% to 75%, 10 points above the national average, with Latinos now making up 25% of all Florida students.

The biggest applause line, however, was when Bush said the U.S. must reestablish a strong relationship with Israel to bring stability to the Middle East. At the NHCLC conference Tuesday, the Hispanic Israel Leadership Coalition (HILC) was launched which aims to be the largest pro-Israel Latino group.

The speech Wednesday followed appearances in Puerto Rico earlier in the week — two Hispanic-focused events that did not go unnoticed by Democrats. (The DNC and EMILY's List blasted Bush on Wednesday on his opposition to President Obama's immigration executive actions and his support for defunding Planned Parenthood, respectively.)

Despite the presidential emphasis surrounding Bush, his speech Wednesday made only one nod to his expected campaign, saying if he is going to go beyond considering running for president, he wants to share who he is and spoke about how his life changed in Mexico when he met his wife.

Bush argued immigration can separate the U.S. from places like Japan, which has a declining population, and Europe, which does not embrace a set of shared values.

"Immigration is a key element of our country's success," he said. "We're a nation of immigrants and it's not time to abandon something that makes us special and unique."

CHRISTIAN POST: Major Hispanic Evangelical Convention Expects 1,000 Attendees; Features Jeb Bush, Mike Huckabee

By [Michael Gryboski](#), Christian Post Reporter

April 27, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/major-hispanic-evangelical-convention-expects-1000-attendees-features-jeb-bush-mike-huckabee-138158/#Ksgqb1LoOXp8SeKF.99>

A major Hispanic evangelical organization will hold a convention in Texas scheduled to include former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.

[The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference](#) will hold its annual multiday convention in Houston from April 28 to 30. With an estimated 1,000 attendees expected, the theme for this year's NHCLC convention is "From Survive to Thrive."

The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of NHCLC, told The Christian Post more about what this theme means.

"Engaging a biblical narrative as a metaphor, we must rebuke the Egypt mindset, push back on the perpetual desert mentality and accept nothing less than prospering in the promise land of faith, family and freedom," said Rodriguez.

"Our community must repudiate all vestiges of spiritual, social and economic failure, and neither tolerate unending survival mode with dependency on Uncle Sam rather than on the gifts and abilities God deposited in each and every one of us. We must thrive so we can become a blessing to others and the answer to someone else's prayer."

[Speakers scheduled](#) for the Houston convention include religious leaders like Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Bishop Harry Jackson, author and senior pastor of 3,000-strong Hope Christian Church; and Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research.

Speakers with a political background include long-serving Congressman Luis Gutierrez of Illinois as well as former governors Jeb Bush and Mike Huckabee.

When asked by CP about how NHCLC was able to get the likes of Bush and Huckabee to speak, Rodriguez responded that "Latino electorate will play a crucial role in the outcome of the 2016 election."

"Understanding issues such as education, religious liberty, immigration, life and limited government are important to Latino voters," said Rodriguez.

"We invited a number of political leaders across both the Republican and Democratic party to join us and address these issues for our constituency."

Items on the agenda include not only speeches on various issues from political and religious leaders, but also developments within NHCLC, including its merger last year with the Latin America-based organization CONELA.

"During the convention, NHCLC/CONELA will celebrate its merger, which became official last year, and reveal its new international name," [noted an NHCLC press release](#).

"It will also introduce new organizational leadership and launch an innovative Hispanic-focused television network in partnership with Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN)."

CHRISTIANITY TODAY (Mandes Post): Loving Our Neighbors: Evangelicals, Immigration, and The Immigration Alliance

By Alejandro Mandes

April 2, 2015

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/march/loving-our-neighbors-evangelicals-immigration-and-immigrati.html>

Alejandro Mandes of The Immigration Alliance explains the necessity of yet another immigration organization.

The following is a blog post by Dr. Alejandro Mandes. Alejandro serves as the EFCA director of Immigrant Mission and Executive director of [The Immigration Alliance](#), through which he works with fifteen denominations. I've known Alejandro for years and appreciate his passion. We've actually argued with one another in front of a group, which is like a love language for me!

In his guest blog post today, Alejandro shares about The Immigration Alliance and how it hopes to serve the immigrants in our communities.

Today there are almost twice as many of undocumented immigrants and documented immigrants needing other legal services but there are roughly the same about of points of service.

Another challenge is that the government strictly limits who can help the immigrant fill out their paperwork. There is a good reason for this. There are many people that take advantage of the immigrants by filling out their paperwork and charging legal rates. Some people do it for altruistic reasons, but the result may be the same. A small mistake can result in a three to 10 year bar from applying and result in immediate deportation. Therefore anyone giving legal advice (which includes filling in the paperwork) is considered a felony even if there was no charge.^[2]

To ameliorate this, the government created a paralegal category called "partial accreditation." This partial accreditation allows for people who get some training and experience to work at a site recognized by the government such as the above mentioned social service organizations. When I heard about this exception I asked if churches could become approved as sites to give legal services. The answer was a very qualified, "Yes." BOOM! In result, Immigrant Hope was formed and partnered with World Relief to multiply the training, develop systems and encourage churches to provide legal services. Think about all the churches in neighborhoods where immigrants live. They already offer services such as English as a Second Language training, food banks, and other forms of service. Churches offer almost everything but what the immigrant wants more than anything: trustworthy, affordable legal services.

Building Capacity—The Immigration Alliance

The Immigration Alliance exists to build capacity for churches to holistically provide services that immigrants are desperate for. The Immigration Alliance is a partnership of 17 different evangelical denominations and coalitions. In three years we set up 40 sites and the plan is to set up 1,000.

We are evangelical so we work with a view to increasing the churches ability to be the Great Community to the lost and left behind. We can't be the Great Community if we are not about the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. When our church can turn a blind eye to the pain of people suffering around us our dance truly has turned to death. I'll not deny that they are breaking the law but two wrongs do not make a right.

For a long time, the good work of the church was to call for a compassionate response to this problem. They joined together and formed The Immigration Table to work together in advocacy. But to advocate without having the ability to serve when our advocacy pays off is tantamount planting a crop but not being equipped to gather the harvest. The Immigration Alliance is the sister to the Evangelical Table. While we see and appreciate advocacy for us is must be secondary to equipping the church to welcome, holistically serve via legal services, make disciples of immigrants and empower immigrants to be the new American church of the future. [1] This number is hard to quantify but the point is that there was not the capacity to meet the need.

[2] Sometimes a family member may help but that is inadvisable since they still might give advice that will result in a bar from staying and may result in deportation.

Here is a video explaining the mission and vision of The Immigration Alliance:

CNN.COM: Ted Cruz aims to be Iowa's favorite Christian candidate

By [Ashley Killough](#)

April 5, 2015

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/05/politics/ted-cruz-iowa-evangelicals/>

*Cedar Falls, Iowa (CNN)*As aides politely tried to rush Ted Cruz from an event in Cedar Falls to one in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on Thursday, the presidential candidate continued shaking hands with anyone who wanted to meet him.

Finally, after the selfies and conversations started to die down, his aides managed to move him closer to the door when a tall, burly man stopped him.

"Senator," he said, "can I pray with you real quick?"

"Yeah," Cruz said, as he clasped the man's upper arm and the two bowed their heads.

It was one of the many moments when Cruz connected with voters on a religious level last week, as the senator from Texas hit the trail in Iowa for the first time as a presidential candidate.

Being the only official contender in the race, Cruz drew large crowds during his two-day swing across the state. He's counting on Iowa, known for its vocal and active evangelical base, to propel him forward in what's expected to be a tough competition among a crowded field of GOP candidates.

Cruz, himself, displays a pastoral swagger when he is speaking on stage and working a room.

The senator regularly avoids using a podium, instead favoring pacing the stage with a wireless microphone, a scene reminiscent of a Sunday morning sermon. When he meets with people after events, he embraces each one's hand with both of his, softens his usually theatric tone and looks people square in the eye -- a familiar interaction between churchgoing Christians and their pastors.

The past two winners of Iowa's caucuses rose to victory with support from the Christian right, and Cruz, who announced his bid last month at the well-known Baptist school Liberty University, is aiming to energize that same base and claim the coveted state as his prize.

Evangelicals make up a large segment of Iowa's Republican voter bloc. According to a [Des Moines Register/Bloomberg Politics poll](#) from January, 44% of likely 2016 Republican caucus-goers said they were born-again or evangelical Christians.

Cruz has built a brand as a stalwart conservative willing to buck GOP leadership on fiscal issues, but he showed in Iowa last week that he's also eager to champion social issues at a time when many Republicans are anxious to avoid them.

He was [one of the loudest defenders](#) of the religious freedom law in Indiana, which came under fire last week for what critics called paving a path to discrimination against gays and lesbians. He described the outrage over the laws as "shameful" and an "assault" on First Amendment rights.

"There are a lot of people here in Iowa and across the country whose hearts are breaking, watching what has happened in the last two weeks," Cruz said Friday night at an event in Des Moines. "We have seen a grossly unfair vilification of religious liberty."

He's more than comfortable talking about his own faith and telling the story of how his father became a Christian and a pastor. Rafael Cruz, who's become a celebrity among Christian conservatives, will frequently visit Iowa over the next year, Cruz told voters. And Cruz's Iowa director, Bryan English, is a former pastor.

Cruz's [first television ads](#) are appearing this weekend during programs on Fox News and NBC that are pegged to Easter Sunday. In the ad, Cruz talks about the impact of the "transformative love of Jesus Christ" on his life.

While neither Mike Huckabee, who won Iowa in 2008, nor Rick Santorum, who won in 2012, went on to win the nomination, their successes helped launch them into high-profile battles with the then-front-runners.

And with both of them likely running again in 2016, the competition will be stiff. That's why, for Cruz, courting evangelicals is only a component of a three-pronged strategy to win the nomination that also includes dominating the tea party faction and competing for the libertarian base.

His stump speech hits on elements that appeal to each faction. He received standing ovations last week for calling to abolish the IRS, and, in a knock against the National Security Agency, he frequently tells audiences to leave their cell phones on so President Obama "can hear every word I have to say."

Cruz argued Thursday that the Republican Party needs to bridge the gap between what he described as the Ron Paul-Rand Paul faction of the party -- young libertarian-minded voters -- and the Santorum base -- evangelicals. The two blocs, he said, are "not necessarily the best of chums."

"If we're going to win, we've got to bring that coalition together," he said in Cedar Falls. "And I think we can do that."

Cruz frequently says he wants to see a return of the evangelical vote to 2004 levels, when more than six in 10 evangelicals voted in the presidential election, a higher than normal turnout for the demographic. That number [has waned slightly since 2004](#) -- but it's not too far off from the 56% of the overall population that voted in 2012.

Still, his campaign believes that if it can tap into the group of evangelicals who've been staying home and get the demographic as a whole to overperform, then that could mean the difference of millions more at the polls.

"If you look at available places for the party to expand the vote, it doesn't exist in the middle, it exists in the evangelical vote," said Rick Tyler, a top Cruz adviser. "It isn't a pond, it's an unfished ocean of available voters who are conservative."

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said he expects to see record turnout among evangelicals in 2016 no matter who the nominee is or what that person says.

Moore points to hot-button topics like religious freedom issues in the U.S., as well as increased attention to the killing of minority Christians in the Middle East and rising anti-Semitism.

"I don't think a candidate is going to be able to get very far simply by using evangelical lingo or by pointing to his or her personal faith," Moore said. "I think a candidate is going to have to

explain how he or she would protect religious liberty and would appoint justices and judges who will maintain the common good."

Later in April, voters in Iowa will see the bulk of the GOP field tackle these issues when they take the stage at an event hosted by the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition. While the past two winners of the Iowa caucuses -- Santorum and Huckabee -- are likely running for president again, Steve Scheffler, president of the group, argued that the field is wide open in terms of who's going to win favor among evangelicals.

Jeb Bush, while not popular among conservative activists, was known for his staunch anti-abortion record as Florida governor and touts his Catholic faith as a big force behind his policy views. Scott Walker is the son of a pastor. Ben Carson, the former neurosurgeon, rose to fame in conservative circles after criticizing the Obama administration at a national prayer breakfast. And other likely candidates -- from Marco Rubio to Rick Perry to Rand Paul -- have made serious efforts to court the religious right.

"It's up for grabs. It's a clean slate regardless of if you've run before," Scheffler said. "Naturally those two (Huckabee and Santorum) have the name recognition and database of people who supported them in the past, but by and large voters are going to say, 'Let me take a good look at all of these candidates.'"

CREATORS SYNDICATE (Harrop Column): Good People Sometimes Back Bad Laws

By Froma Harrop

April 7, 2015

<http://www.creators.com/opinion/froma-harrop/good-people-sometimes-back-bad-laws.html>

A law in Indiana and a bill in Arkansas making life harder for their gay neighbors have lost their wheels in a surprising smashup. Business interests, usually associated with the conservative cause, lowered the boom on "religious freedom" legislation supported by social conservatives. But we are not here to discuss the Republican rift between economic and religious conservatives. Today's mission is to narrow the far wider gap between liberals and social conservatives. It's to urge liberals holding the fervent belief in the right to same-sex marriage to give the other side a little space to evolve.

Condemning these traditionalists as base bigots is unproductive. Liberals might borrow the sentiment religious conservatives have often applied to homosexuality: Hate the sin, but love the sinner.

Such laws are indeed discriminatory, and nastiness may propel some of their supporters. But many of the backers, though they regard homosexuality as immoral, are not especially hostile toward gay people. Some have been genuinely shocked to hear that they would be considered unkind, unfriendly and bigoted.

There's a tendency in our culture to cluster in communities of like-minded people and throw lightning bolts of disapproval over the walls into other like-minded communities. But where possible, persuasion beats condemnation every time.

The train to legalized gay marriage is unstoppable, so let it continue rolling at a comfortable pace. When Massachusetts first permitted same-sex marriage in 2004, pollsters asked that state's residents whether they defined marriage as something between a man and a woman. A majority said yes.

Most of the respondents' answers in 2004 reflected not an animosity toward gay people but rather a traditional view of marriage. A poll asking the same question today would undoubtedly find a majority in Massachusetts saying "not necessarily."

To my gay friends who regard the ability to marry another of the same sex as a basic human right, I hear you.

But you must concede that the path for widespread legalization of same-sex marriage — starting in liberal places, such as Massachusetts, and then expanding one state at a time as more Americans became comfortable with the idea — has been quite effective.

To my liberal friends of whatever sexual orientation, you and social conservatives share a few areas of common interest. This is territory you can meet on if you don't employ a scorched-earth policy every time you disagree.

The environment is one example. The Christian Coalition of America has fought efforts by fossil fuel interests and utilities to slap taxes on solar panels. In explaining its position, the coalition's president wrote, "We recognize the biblical mandate to care for God's creation and protect our children's future." Whatever the hearer's spiritual bent, those words are among the most beautiful statements of the environmentalist creed ever made.

White evangelicals may be more conservative on other issues than the population at large, but 64 percent told pollsters for LifeWay Research that they favor comprehensive immigration reform. Some of their church leaders have been among the most vocal proponents of a humanitarian approach to fixing the immigration laws.

The battle against casinos seems a lost cause, but Christian conservatives have led the good fight. Gambling as a means to raise government revenues is immoral, they say, and one reason is that it fleeces the most economically vulnerable members of the community.

What liberals and religious conservatives share is a belief that many of our most important values can't be measured in dollars. One can't paper over these groups' divergent worldviews.

But while their advocates might not expect to embrace very often, they should preserve enough common ground to hold hands once in a while.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (Barnett Post): GOP divided on in-state tuition for immigrants

By Melissa Barnett

April 13, 2015

<http://trailblazersblog.dallasnews.com/2015/04/gop-divided-on-in-state-tuition-for-immigrants.html/>

AUSTIN—Veteran Republicans touted their support for a law allowing certain unauthorized immigrants to pay in-state college tuition rates as rooted in conservative values in the latest example to highlight ideological differences within the GOP.

Their proclamations come as tea party-leaning conservatives in the Senate are moving forward on a bill that would repeal the 14-year-old program. Such divisions among Republicans could hinder chances for repeal this session.

In a rally at the Capitol on Monday, former Republican lawmakers, business representatives and faith leaders—at times citing their conservative bona fides—advocated for the policy as good for the economy.

Former state representative Carl Isett, R-Lubbock, said the original law “validated the principles of conservative government.”

“This is not a partisan issue; it should never be construed as a partisan issue. It should be construed as a principled issue: what do we believe is right and best for the future of our state,” he said.

Last week, a Senate panel voted 4-3 along party lines to approve a bill authored by Sen. Donna Campbell, R-New Braunfels, to repeal the in-state tuition law. Republicans cast the four votes in favor.

The current program allows students in the country illegally who have lived in the state for at least three years and have a Texas high school diploma or GED to pay the cheaper in-state tuition rate at public colleges and universities across the state.

Some Republicans, including Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, have pushed for the repeal as part of a hard line stance against illegal immigration. They argue that the ability to pay in-state tuition at state universities is a “magnet” for people crossing the border illegally.

But other GOP lawmakers counter that repealing the program is the wrong way to crack down on illegal immigration and ultimately bad for the state economy. Resistance from those members could snag any chances at repealing the law.

Sen. Kevin Eltife, R-Tyler, said repealing the law would be “punishing the wrong people” and could have a negative impact on the community. Having a better educated workforce—by means of greater access to education—would benefit all, he said last week during a political event hosted by the Texas Tribune.

“The federal government has got to fix the immigration system,” he said. “But these are kids who have been in the state at least three years, been three years through the public education system. Are we going to punish them with out-of-state tuition versus in-state tuition?”

At the rally, Bill Hammond, former Republican lawmaker and head of the Texas Association of Business, called the 2001 in-state tuition law “sound public policy” and advocated that it was important for closing skill gaps in the state’s workforce.

Tim Moore, a Baptist minister in Austin, said many of the people benefiting from the law have come to the country “through no decision of their own” and deserve the opportunity to be treated as a resident.

“Conservatism ought to be about what is worthy of being conserved,” he said in reference to keeping the 2001 law.

DES MOINES REGISTER (Shaul Op-Ed): Evangelicals support immigration reform

By the Rev. John Shaul

April 3, 2015

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2015/04/03/evangelicals-immigration-reform/70873812/>

As potential presidential candidates descend upon Iowa, some pundits will likely suggest that using sharp anti-immigration rhetoric is a smart strategy to win over Iowan evangelical Christian voters, who usually make up more than half of voters in the GOP Iowa caucuses.

But as an evangelical Iowan, I’m looking for a candidate who reflects my own values, including a commitment to the Biblical mandate to welcome and love immigrants. I’m not alone: A new poll by Lifeway Research finds that seven in 10 evangelical Christians support immigration reforms including both secured borders and an earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Half of evangelical voters say they would be more likely to support a presidential candidate who championed these policies, while only 15 percent would be less likely to support a pro-immigration reform candidate. Would-be candidates have much to gain, and little to lose, by supporting immigration reform.

Immigration is a personal issue for many evangelical Christians. Many of our churches have responded to immigrants as Scripture instructs us: by reaching out, welcoming them into our churches, sharing the hope of the gospel, and helping to meet human needs as an expression of our faith. As we’ve done so, we have seen the human impacts of a dysfunctional immigration system. The case of Max Villatoro, an Iowa City pastor who was deported to Honduras, highlights the impact on families of a dysfunctional immigration system and the urgency of reform.

Immigration is also a Biblical issue. Scripture actually has a lot to say on the topic of immigration, with more than 92 references to the Hebrew *ger* — the immigrant — in the Old Testament alone. Immigrants are referenced alongside orphans and widows as uniquely vulnerable groups for whom God commands His people to care. We are consistently

commanded to practice hospitality, which literally means the love of strangers. Xenophobia — the fear of strangers — is not an option for followers of Jesus, nor is dehumanizing rhetoric. We're also commanded in Scripture to honor the law. But our current immigration system, rather than honoring the law, makes a mockery of it. No administration in recent history has seriously contemplated fully enforcing the law — which would mean deporting more than 11 million people, most of whom are hard-working individuals who have been here for a decade or more — because it would have devastating consequences for our economy. But Congress has been unwilling to *change* the law to make it make sense for the needs of our economy, which would restore order to an antiquated, unenforceable system.

Hundreds of evangelical Christian pastors, including many here in Iowa, have urged Congress to come together on a bipartisan basis to reform our immigration laws in ways consistent with Biblical values. The [Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform](#) calls for reforms that respect the rule of law, secure our borders, and are fair to taxpayers while also recognizing the dignity of each person, maintaining intact families whenever possible, and establishing a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and wish to become permanent residents of the United States. In between the extremes of either mass deportation, on one hand, or blanket amnesty, on the other, we believe there is a reasonable path forward on immigration consistent with Biblical values.

On the other hand, if candidates choose to speak out against immigrants and immigration reform, they are likely to scare away the voting U.S. citizen children and grandchildren of recent immigrants, many of whom share the conservative social values of most evangelical Christians, but who are unlikely to vote for a candidate who threatens to deport their family, fellow church members, and friends who are undocumented. By pushing away immigrant voters and their children with strong anti-immigration rhetoric and policies, supposedly conservative candidates are actually increasingly the likelihood that the next resident of the White House will be someone who does not share conservative Christian values, whose policies and judicial appointments will erode religious liberty and protections of unborn children.

My appeal to candidates visiting our state would be to tune out the media personalities and pundits who do not really know any Iowan evangelicals, and instead spend some time reading what the Scripture has to say about immigrants, visiting our ministries that serve and reach out to our new immigrant neighbors, and seeking God's wisdom as you formulate your positions.

THE REV. JOHN SHAULL of Winterset serves as the director of missions for the Metro Baptist Association of Iowa. Contact: pastor_j@hotmail.com

FOX NEWS LATINO: Jeb Bush says 11 million undocumented immigrants deserve chance to stay

April 30, 2015

<http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2015/04/30/jeb-bush-says-11-million-undocumented-immigrants-in-us-deserve-chance-to-stay/>

HOUSTON (AP) — Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush declared Wednesday that 11 million immigrants in the country illegally should have an opportunity to stay, wading yet again into his party's contentious immigrant debate.

In tone and substance, Bush stands out among the many Republicans lining up for the GOP's next presidential primary, where conservatives who oppose an immigration overhaul often hold outsized influence. As he moves toward a presidential campaign, the brother and son of former presidents has not backed away from his defense of immigrants in the country illegally and a policy that would allow them to attain legal status under certain conditions.

"We're a nation of immigrants," Bush said at the National Christian Hispanic Leadership Conference that brought several hundred Hispanic evangelical leaders to Houston this week.

"This is not the time to abandon something that makes us special and unique."

A successful immigration overhaul is more than simply strengthening the border, Bush said, referring to "11 million people that should come out from the shadows and receive earned legal status." He said such immigrants should be required to pay taxes, work and not receive government benefits.

Republicans have struggled to win over the nation's surging Hispanic population in recent years. Not since the 2004 re-election campaign of President George W. Bush, Jeb's older brother, has a Republican presidential candidate earned as much as 40 percent of the Hispanic vote. Mitt Romney earned a dismal 27 percent in losing what was widely considered a winnable 2012 contest.

Bush's mother and father, former President George. H.W. Bush and first lady Barbara Bush, were on hand for the speech.

It was Jeb Bush's second Hispanic outreach event this week. He spent Tuesday campaigning in Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory that will hold a presidential primary contest, yet is not included in the Electoral College that decides the general election.

At both stops, Bush moved seamlessly from English to Spanish in remarks that highlighted his deep personal connections to Hispanic culture.

He opened his Houston speech in Spanish, referring to the crowd of Hispanic Christians as "the hope of this country." And as he often does in public appearances, Bush recounted the story of meeting his Mexican-born wife, Columba, while studying in Mexico.

It was Columba's influence, he said, that pushed him to obtain a degree in Latin American studies and later spend roughly two years living in Venezuela early in his business career. Bush converted to Catholicism after moving to Miami.

The Democratic allied group, EMILY's List, issued a statement shortly before Bush's appearance charging that his platform "hinders the ability for Latinas to make personal health choices and their economic security." Bush, his advisers said, say he supports efforts to strip federal financing from Planned Parenthood because of its connection to abortion services.

To be sure, Bush is not completely in step with activists who want accommodations made for people illegally in the U.S. Like other Republican presidential prospects, he has said he would overturn President Barack Obama's executive order shielding millions of immigrants from deportation.

Yet Bush was received warmly by the Hispanic crowd in Houston. He was introduced as someone who understands Hispanic culture and literally speaks its language. Of the large field of likely Republican White House prospects, only Florida Sen. Marco Rubio also speaks fluent Spanish.

Bush said the nation's economy depends on a restructured immigration system. "This country does not do well when people lurk in the shadows," Bush said. "This country does spectacularly well when everybody can pursue their God-given abilities."

Organizers say Rubio was invited to address the conference, but declined because of a scheduling conflict. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee was scheduled to appear Wednesday night.

KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINEL (Wyatt Letter): Legislators didn't reflect state's values

Apr 30, 2015

http://www.knoxnews.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/letter-legislators-didnt-reflect-states-values_27999222

It was with great disappointment that I followed the Tennessee Legislature's action, and lack of action, during this past session. Along with so many of the citizens of this area, I come from a long line of Tennesseans who have treasured their citizenship in this great state, who have understood their civic duty as responsible citizens to care for those who are in need, whoever those persons might be and whatever that need might be.

I found it heart-breaking that the House failed by one vote to approve the in-state tuition for undocumented children of immigrant parents who have grown up in our state and completed their high school education here. While passed by the Senate 21-12, these young students have seen their hopes for training for future professional degrees and service to this country dashed again. I believe that every child deserves the right to a good education; every child has the right to take advantage of opportunities to assure their future; every child needs training so that they can realize their potential and make a difference in the world, becoming an adult who lives responsibly. It is to our shame that this great state has failed to offer this opportunity to these young people.

Coupled with this great disappointment was the news of the House's overwhelming vote to name the Bible as the State Book. It is easy to vote "for the Bible", but it is much harder to vote for carrying out the values and teachings which are proclaimed there. I pray that those values, which are dear to Tennesseans, may be seen in the coming legislature and its actions – carrying for those in need, welcoming the stranger in our midst, and offering opportunity to those who want to live responsibly now and in the future.

Joyce Cope Wyatt

Knoxville, Tennessee 37931

KUT NEWS 90.5 (Texas): Hispanic Evangelicals Say Texas Bill Wrongfully Targets Undocumented Christians

By Veronica Zaragovia

April 7, 2015

<http://kut.org/post/hispanic-evangelicals-say-texas-bill-wrongfully-targets-undocumented-christians>

Hispanic evangelicals in Texas have common ground with some conservative Texas lawmakers on issues like same-sex marriage and abortion. When it comes to a measure known as the sanctuary cities bill, however, evangelicals say their faith stops them from supporting the measure.

Last month, hundreds of evangelical Christian pastors came to the State Capitol to show this opposition to the sanctuary cities bill, [Senate Bill 185](#), from State [Sen. Charles Perry](#) (R-Lubbock). It would punish local police departments that forbid officers from asking people they detain about their immigration status.

Pastor Lynn Godsey, an evangelical pastor from Ennis, just south of Dallas, came back to the Capitol Monday to visit with lawmakers in the hopes they'll vote against the bill.

"There's a big difference between a criminal and a Christian," says Godsey, adding that if few police officers do racial profiling now, this bill would allow them to do it regularly. "Then that will become what we as pastors call persecuting the church of Jesus Christ, and any legislators that are involved in that – God have mercy on their souls, because then they pick on somebody bigger than them and me and that's God Almighty."

Tears come to Godsey's eyes when he talks about four groups that the Bible says God will always defend – the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger. Many evangelicals consider undocumented immigrants as strangers they need to protect.

After Monday's hearing on the sanctuary cities bill, I asked Sen. Perry what he would say to faith leaders like Godsey, who worry police officers will wait outside of churches to stop someone making a wrong turn, for example. Does he worry that his bill would cause a rift between him and this religious community?

"I hope not, because we all serve the same God in this case," he said. "I have all the faith in the world, but that's just an extreme example and I know it's built out of passion and concern, and I would never purport to know how they feel by not walking in those shoes. I don't try to make judgments in that regard, but at the same time, I just trust our law officials more than to abuse something, and if they do that they should be punished to the extent the law allows."

His bill now has an exemption for officers who work at public schools, though not for officers who work for hospital districts. Despite the changes, Democrats and some in law enforcement continue to oppose the bill.

As does Bee Moorhead, the executive director of Texas Impact, a network of interfaith members. Moorhead says some conservative lawmakers may be surprised that evangelicals are against this measure since they often agree on other conservative issues.

"This bill is really close to the hearts of people who are involved with immigrant communities," she says, adding that lawmakers should to take a step back and give the bill more thought. "This isn't some theoretical possibility for them, they see it as a direct threat to the health and safety of people they know and love. There are a lot more perspectives here and we might need to have a lot more sophisticated conversation on this issue with the faith community to really understand what these concerns are."

On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs and Military Installations might take a vote on Sen. Perry's bill. If the committee passes it, and the full Senate does, too, it'll head to the House.

Pastor Lynn Godsey says if the bill does make it over to the lower chamber, hundreds of pastors from across the state will return to the Capitol for another rally.

NBC NEWS: What Would Ted Cruz Do, Ask Pro-Immigration Evangelicals?

By Suzanne Gamboa

March 31st 2015

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/does-ted-cruzs-immigration-stand-matter-evangelical-voters-n332811>

One of the biggest boosts to the immigration movement in recent years has been growing support from evangelicals.

As the numbers of Latinos and immigrants of various races and ethnicities have grown, so has the potential for expansion of U.S. evangelical congregations.

So the attempt by GOP Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, to appeal to evangelical voters on whom he has pinned his presidential aspirations raises the question of whether he can woo this electorate even with his tough stance on immigration.

A Cruz campaign spokeswoman did not respond to a request from NBC News for comment. But while Cruz has taken a generally hardline approach on immigration reform, evangelicals have become activists on the issue in Washington and from the pulpit. Over time, congregations and evangelical leaders have subjected their thinking on immigration and in particular on immigrants who are not legally in the country to the "What Would Jesus Do?" test.

Those who have decided that Christ's teaching call for more than deportation have taken significant steps. They have formed a group, the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#), around the issue. That group paid for and ran newspaper and radio ads aimed at House Speaker John Boehner last year as the House dragged its feet on immigration reform legislation. Group leaders also teamed with Roman Catholic bishops in an open letter to House members urging them to get moving on immigration reform.

The Evangelical Immigration Table includes Liberty Counsel, chaired and founded by Matthew Staver, dean of the law school at Liberty University, the Jerry Falwell-founded school [where Cruz announced his candidacy](#).

"It goes to the consistency of our mission and our identity as evangelicals," said Jenny Yang, director of advocacy and policy for [World Relief](#), the humanitarian arm of the [National Association of Evangelicals](#).

Officials from NAE were on vacation and could not be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, Cruz's activity on immigration reform has conflicted with the forward movement on immigration reform that evangelicals have wanted.

Cruz led the efforts last December to use a funding bill to repeal President Barack Obama's immigration executive action programs. He opposed the Senate-passed "Gang of Eight" comprehensive immigration reform bill and a Republican plan to give probationary legal status to immigrants while the border was being secured.

He [has said](#) he opposed the path to citizenship granted in the Senate immigration bill, but didn't block the granting of work permits to immigrants here illegally. He has also said he wants to fix the nation's legal immigration system. Cruz has supported a border security first plan. Parts of his immigration views, however, await clarification on the campaign trail.

The biggest support for immigration reform among evangelicals is among Latino evangelicals, who number about 8 million nationally, said the Rev. Gabriel Salguero, president of the [National Latino Evangelical Coalition](#).

Salguero said Cruz has tainted his candidacy because of his immigration reform record. Latinos are the fastest growing group of evangelicals in the U.S. — add to that Asian, Korean, Chinese, African and West Indies populations who also are joining evangelical churches and have significant immigrant populations, he said.

A tough stand on immigration is "not helpful to any candidate, Sen. Cruz, or anyone," Salguero said. "Some of his possible challengers like (Jeb) Bush and (Sen.) Rand Paul have a position that is more conciliatory and willing to negotiate.

Salguero's organization has pushed ahead, despite the opposition of Cruz and others to Obama's executive action programs, now on hold pending the outcome of a lawsuit filed by Texas and more than two dozen states.

Salguero's group has been holding training sessions for evangelical churches so their legal experts can help their parishioners apply for the deferred deportation programs made possible by Obama's executive action and to help them navigate other parts of the immigration system, much as the Catholic Legal Immigration Network has done for many years.

A 2014 survey by [Public Religion Research Institute](#) showed nearly 54 percent of white evangelical protestants favored allowing immigrants here illegally to become citizens and 14 percent supported allowing them to become legal permanent residents. Just 30 percent supported deporting them. The [survey sample of 8,000 white evangelicals](#) is the largest surveyed on the issue, according to PRRI.

"Generally speaking there has been steady majority support over the last few years for a path to citizenship for immigrants who are living in the country illegally, both among the general population and religious groups, including more conservative and Republican-leaning religious groups such as white evangelical Protestants," said Robert P. Jones, PRRI's CEO.

But evangelicals are a diverse group, points out Alfonso Aguilar, executive director of the conservative [American Principle's Project's Latino Partnership](#).

Politically influential evangelicals such as [Focus on the Family](#)'s founder James Dobson; [Family Research Council](#) president Tony Perkins or [American Values](#) president Gary Bauer, are not active on immigration reform, Aguilar said.

"In fact, when they talked about it, they said things that were not very good," said Aguilar, an immigration reform supporter.

But Yang counters that the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination, has backed a path to legal status for immigrants in a resolution it passed in 2011. Also, Jim Daly, current president and CEO of Focus on the Family, joined the Evangelical Immigration Table in 2012.

"The way we treat immigrants on the policy level demonstrates a lot about what we believe about our ethos as a faith group and what the Bible teaches us as well," Yang said.

Ali Noorani, executive director of the [National Immigration Forum](#), has worked since 2008 to bring evangelicals into the immigration reform movement, which led to the creation of "Bibles Badges Business" made up of preachers, law enforcement and business people who support reform.

"Whether it is Sen. Cruz or any other candidate, Republican primary voters have one question: What is their solution to a broken immigration system? Deport 11 million people?" Noorani asked. "The majority of evangelical voters want a compassionate, practical, solution. Deporting 11 million people and their families is neither compassionate nor practical — every serious candidate for president knows that."

Jeb Bush is scheduled to speak at the annual meeting of the [National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference](#) (NHCLC) in Houston next month. The evangelical organization represents 40,118 evangelical congregations, according to its [website](#). Bush has been criticized by some conservatives for defending illegal migration as an "act of love," but has also criticized Obama's executive action as "ill advised." He'll be sharing billing with immigration reform champion Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill.

Samuel Rodriguez, president of NHCLC, has been an enthusiastic supporter of immigration reform. In 2013, he fasted with other immigration activists in the hope it would move Boehner to take legislation on the issue to a vote. Rodriguez [fasted 40 days](#).

He said Cruz's candidacy should be celebrated because Cruz, as an American with Hispanic ancestry, "embodies the narrative of immigrants."

"Accordingly, while I disagree with Sen. Cruz's rhetoric on immigration," Rodriguez said, "I hope that this experience will enable him to embrace the redemptive and compassionate idea of an immigration solution that secures our borders and values while providing a pathway for the integration of those currently undocumented."

NEW YORK OBSERVER: Higher Power: New York's Most Influential Religious Leaders

By Roja Heydarpour

April 3, 2015

<http://observer.com/2015/04/higher-power-new-yorks-most-influential-religious-leaders/>
[...]

Rev. Gabriel Salguero

President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

Co-Pastor, Lamb's Church of the Nazarene

Last November, on the day President Obama announced his plan to shield millions of immigrants from deportation, Rev. Gabriel Salguero had a seat on Air Force One. The president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, which represents 3,000 churches across the country, Rev. Salguero has become a leading proponent on immigration reform, though he describes himself as a nonpartisan pastor.

"Immigration is inevitable," he told the *Observer* in Lamb's Church on Rivington Street, where the scent of fresh paint welcomes visitors at the door. "You can slow it down, but you can't stop it."

"I am the son of a homeless man," Rev. Salguero went on. "My father was a homeless junkie." As a boy, he witnessed the "transformative power of the gospel" change his father, who ultimately became a pastor in New Jersey.

Continuing in the family business, Rev. Salguero, 40, and his wife became co-pastors of Lamb's Church nine years ago and have been renovating and remodeling the space since. The first order of business? Multilingual services. The Lower East Side increasingly had a thriving Chinese population, so Rev. Salguero decided to offer services in English, Spanish and Mandarin. The work continues. The multi-level building houses a food pantry, an event space, offices, a 25-bed boy's shelter—and, oh, a sanctuary.

TEXAS TRIBUNE: Hispanic Christians Highlight GOP Immigration Dilemma

By [Patrick Svitek](#)

April 29, 2015

<http://www.texastribune.org/2015/04/29/evangelical-confab-puts-immigration-dilemma-displa/>

HOUSTON — As far as recent forums featuring Republican White House hopefuls go, Wednesday's meeting of Hispanic evangelicals here was a bit unusual. Its host is an ardent supporter of comprehensive immigration reform, a dirty phrase to many GOP primary voters. And the two potential candidates who spoke did little to back away from views on immigration that have gotten them in trouble with that conservative wing of their party.

The gathering of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference put on vivid display the disparate audiences some Republicans are speaking to on immigration as they try to pave a path to the White House. In one corner are the conservative activists in places like Iowa and South Carolina who lustily applaud as GOP speakers denounce "amnesty" on the stump. In the other corner are those who filled the ballroom here, conservative-leaning voters for whom the immigration issue strikes closer to home than it does for the average Hawkeye State powerbroker.

Samuel Rodriguez, the fiery reverend who heads the NCHLC, said that when it comes to reaching Hispanic evangelicals, it will be much easier for Republicans to emphasize religious freedom rather than flesh out their views on the touchier subject of immigration. He vowed not to let any presidential candidate off the hook.

"We will press them on immigration. I will press them on immigration — I can guarantee you that," Rodriguez told reporters. "I want a presidential hopeful on the GOP side who'll say, 'Listen, if I'm elected president, I guarantee you I will sit down with Congress, and we will pass comprehensive immigration reform that will secure the border. It will not be amnesty, but it will provide a pathway for integration to the millions that are currently here undocumented because we are pro-faith, we are pro-family and we do not believe in separating families.' Period."

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, whose immigration position is considered one of his biggest liabilities among Republican primary voters, addressed the issue head-on Wednesday — to the point of overshadowing the education-reform message on which his speech was centered. He unapologetically affirmed his support for a pathway to legal status for the millions of people in the country of illegally, stressing they have to earn it.

"This country does not do well when people lurk in the shadows," Bush said. "This country does spectacularly well when everybody can pursue their God-given abilities."

The bilingual Bush worked hard to connect with the audience of hundreds of Hispanic evangelicals, not letting them forget his wife's Mexican roots and occasionally breaking into asides in Spanish that impressed at least one attendee.

"This guy's talking from the inside," said Enrique Pinedo, a reverend from Florida who caught Bush's speech. Pinedo added his former governor could have been more detailed on immigration, but he cut Bush some slack, recognizing the political reality he faces. "I know that he's in the Republican Party."

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, who is expected to announce next week whether he is running for president, addressed the conference Wednesday evening and only glossed over the hot-button issue, opting for an emphasis on religious freedom that Rodriguez predicted would come more naturally to Republicans.

"This country has been a magnet for people throughout the ages," Huckabee said, putting a positive spin on a word frequently used by the GOP's fiercest critics of immigration reform.

"There's so many arguments about immigration policy — arguments about who should come and when and how.

"There's no time to argue all of those," he added before repeating a well-honed line from his stump speech, drawing loud applause. Americans should "get on our knees and thank God that we live in a country that people are trying to get into, not a country they're trying to get out of." Huckabee [has called](#) a pathway to citizenship a "rational approach" to immigration reform, though he was much more reluctant to re-endorse the idea Wednesday. He told reporters that

dealing with the millions of people in the country illegally is somewhat of an "unnecessary controversy" unless Americans are confident the border is secure.

Still, Huckabee made no bones about the political thorniness of immigration, volunteering that he has long taken heat for championing legislation in Arkansas that let undocumented immigrants qualify for in-state tuition. And he acknowledged his party is not unified on the issue as it barrels toward the 2016 presidential election. "I don't think there's a consensus," Huckabee said.

Rodriguez is hoping to fill that void and was unambiguous throughout the conference about holding Republicans' feet to the fire. The NHCLC counts more than 40,000 churches among its members and tends to line up with the GOP on social issues but sees immigration somewhat differently.

In policy papers distributed to reporters, the NHCLC said it "reluctantly supported" President Barack Obama's executive action last year shielding millions of undocumented immigrants from deportation, preferring a congressional solution to a unilateral move. A number of White House hopefuls including Bush have said they would reverse Obama's executive action if elected.

Critics have nonetheless slapped the NHCLC with the label of "pro-amnesty," and organizations that have hardline positions on immigration reform view it with a skeptical eye.

"This is a group that has been pushing for mass immigration for a long time," said Ira Mehlman, a spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform. Mehlman, like others skeptical of the NHCLC, contended some groups who purport to have the best interests of Hispanics in mind are driven by a business lobby looking for cheap labor. "They're trying to influence the Republican Party — it's not entirely a grassroots movement."

Part of the NHCLC's efforts to influence the presidential conversation include a pledge it would like the candidates to sign that hints at a pathway to citizenship. Asked if he would sign the pledge, Huckabee told a reporter Wednesday he had not yet seen it.

"I'll happily read it, get to know it and give you an answer on that," Huckabee replied as Rodriguez, seated beside the might-be presidential candidate, nodded along enthusiastically.

SPARTANBURG HERALD JOURNAL: Haley backs efforts of faith groups to bring refugees to Spartanburg

By [Daniel J. Gross](#)

April 21, 2015

<http://www.goupstate.com/article/20150421/ARTICLES/150429942/o/FRONTPAGE?p=all&tc=pgall>

Leaders in the faith community say they are eager to bring refugees to Spartanburg after Gov. Nikki Haley issued a letter to local legislators to address qualms about the issue.

Haley sent a letter Tuesday to the Spartanburg County Legislative Delegation. In the letter, Haley details the country's and South Carolina's humanitarian mission of welcoming refugees around the world to participate in the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, which has been in place since 1975.

Sixty refugees may call Hub City home as early as this year after World Relief, a faith-based organization sponsoring the resettlement, opened an office in Spartanburg.

The plans spurred debate between those eager to help refugees overseas and those skeptical of how immigrants will affect safety, funding and services.

"These people are in danger of losing their lives in their home countries for things such as aiding U.S. troops as translators or guides, membership of a religious minority, or regional war or genocide," Haley wrote in the letter.

She said those selected will be vetted and screened by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and will be supported by local families, churches and nonprofits upon their arrival. She

also called on the U.S. Department of State to provide greater transparency in the vetting process to ensure the program's safety.

"Just as we cannot allow fear to erode America's place in the world as accepting of immigrants who chose to come legally and contribute as citizens, nor can we allow ineffective federal bureaucracies to put our citizens at risk," Haley wrote.

State representatives and Spartanburg County Council members had sought answers from the governor's office after constituents raised concerns about a refugee resettlement program in Spartanburg.

World Relief local director Jason Lee said about 40 local church leaders have voiced support for the program and have offered to lend support to those arriving from overseas.

He said churches have signed on to designate families or groups of volunteers to guide refugees through the resettling process.

"It's a great opportunity for our community to bless others. I haven't heard anything from either side that would cause me to want to see us shut our community off from these people," said the Rev. D.J. Horton, the pastor of Anderson Mill Road Baptist Church.

Horton said he understands legislators have questions, and he hopes that the program's details will be laid out soon. He wants everyone to be supportive in the long run, he said.

"We're obligated. We're obligated as Christians to help the hurting," Horton said.

"God encourages his people to welcome a stranger," added Jim Goodroe, the director of missions for the Spartanburg County Baptist Network.

Lee said the program relies heavily on using volunteer teams from churches to help guide refugees to housing, services and jobs to acclimate to the community. Designated groups will meet the refugees at the airport and continue to be their guide and support system from there.

"We see them as viable contributing citizens to Spartanburg in years to come," Lee said.

About half of the refugees coming to Spartanburg are Christians, Lee said. He added that the "greatest opportunity" is to share the gospel with those outside the faith.

"We believe that the Bible calls us to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger, and that stranger the Bible is really talking about is the immigrants," Lee said. "Refugees are the world's most vulnerable people."

Lee and Goodroe referenced a study done out of Cleveland where researchers found that out of the 4,500 refugees brought to that area between 2000 and 2012, 75 percent of those older than 16 found jobs, and only 8 percent were still on any government assistance within two years.

Rep. Donna Hicks initially called for a town hall to solicit feedback about the plan, but she has put the gathering on hold now that details are coming forward. She said she has since met with organizers and state leaders and has received information to answer questions.

"What I learned is that World Relief is working with Spartanburg County. They're working on a system to make sure refugees are brought in and well taken care of," Hicks said.

She met with a World Relief leader who detailed plans for the program and learned how each refugee is funded through the state Department of Social Services, through federal grants, she said. Medical care was a concern for constituents, Hicks said, but said that refugees will be sent to the Middle Tyger River Community Center to use its free clinic and be cared for by interns with the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System.

She, however, said terrorism remains an issue and said she hopes that World Relief can recognize Spartanburg residents' concerns about Islamic extremist groups.

She said she is trusting in the program's vetting process but asking that those being brought to Spartanburg not come from Syria, given her constituents' fears over who may be connected to terrorist groups.

"Of that 60, they hopefully can bring in somebody other than Syrians. If they want to make this work, it would behoove them to do that," she said. "I'm trying to trust the process. We'll just have to see."

THE STATE (South Carolina): Gowdy wants to hold plans to bring refugees to Spartanburg

By Kim Kimzey

April 13, 2015

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article18462704.html>

SPARTANBURG COUNTY, SC

U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy has asked that plans to resettle refugees in the Spartanburg area be placed on hold.

In a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry issued Monday, Gowdy wrote that he is “deeply concerned about the lack of notice, information, and consultation afforded to me and my constituents about this issue.”

It was announced last month that World Relief would establish an office in Spartanburg and bring in its first group of refugees this year. World Relief, a faith-based organization, is one of nine resettlement agencies that sponsors refugees granted admission to the United States. Gowdy raised 17 questions about the resettlement, including when the resettlement agency received approval, what steps were taken to verify claims about Spartanburg’s readiness to resettle refugees and what steps, if any, were taken to notify local government officials before the resettlement proposal was approved.

Gowdy also questioned how much federal funding the resettlement agency and refugees will receive and the distribution of those funds, as well as what federal, state and local benefits refugees are entitled to receive.

Logistical questions include how many refugees will resettle in the Spartanburg area, when they are expected to arrive, how they are chosen, their countries of origin and whether any refugees have criminal convictions. Gowdy also asked who will ensure housing, employment and education services and how many refugees are school-aged children who will need local governments to provide interpreters or teachers who speak their respective languages.

Gowdy, a Spartanburg Republican, chairs the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security. He requested that officials receive at least one month’s notice before the first refugee arrives in the Spartanburg area.

Jason Lee, executive director of the Spartanburg office of World Relief, previously said leaders from the local faith community approached the organization about opening an office here.

The Spartanburg office has received initial approval to resettle around 60 refugees in the coming year. But that plan had some people sounding the alarm about the potential impact.

Website Refugee Resettlement Watch posted that Spartanburg is “targeted to be colonized as next refugee ‘seed’ community.” The blog urges residents to demand answers about so-called “refugee seedlings” that it claims are “planted” by the Obama Administration.

Wofford College adjunct professor Christina Jeffrey took to social media with her concerns about the resettlement. Jeffrey also wrote an opinion piece, published in the Herald-Journal, calling on World Relief to provide the community “a detailed plan for the settlement and to provide impact statements for us. Impact statements should include plans for housing, transportation, county schools, employment, health care, skills training, social services, public safety, etc.”

Jenny Yang is vice president of Advocacy and Policy at World Relief. In a phone interview, Yang said the agency spent months getting approval from federal and state officials.

Yang said a proposal was submitted to the State Department that oversees the refugee resettlement program. She said the final decision is up to a state refugee coordinator who determines whether cities are able to receive refugees, including housing and economic opportunities.

Yang also said World Relief worked with local churches for several months before it considered opening an office. “It wasn’t a decision that was spur of the moment,” she said.

Yang said World Relief could answer Gowdy's questions. She said the organization has received some "push back" in other cities, mostly from local officials.

"We wouldn't have opened an office if it weren't for conversations that we had with churches and those churches actually asking us to come in to help them in their mission of helping the foreign born and refugees in their communities," Yang said.

She said that World Relief opens offices in cities where churches and community members express support, as well as "practical considerations" such as housing and economic opportunities.

"There has been very vocal support, especially among churches that want to welcome these refugees, and that's the reason we're going to Spartanburg," Yang said.

According to State Department figures, 73 refugees entered South Carolina from October 2014 through February. Refugees came from Burma, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, Tajikistan and Thailand. Most were from Malaysia (16) and Thailand (14). Four refugees from Iraq also arrived here during that same time frame.

WASHINGTON POST: In a swing across Iowa, Ted Cruz packs in the crowds with a conservative call

By Katie Zezima

April 3, 2015

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/in-a-swing-across-iowa-ted-cruz-packs-in-the-crowds-with-a-conservative-call/2015/04/03/9852d37c-da27-11e4-8103-fa84725dbf9d_story.html

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa — Sen. Ted Cruz, pacing as he always does when making a stump speech, looked out on a room packed with people and made note of the furniture.

"The reason I'm optimistic is because we ran out of chairs," Cruz (R-Tex.) said to the crowd at the Longbranch Hotel, some in straight-backed chairs, others massed in the back.

It's a line Cruz would use more than once on his first trip to Iowa as a declared presidential candidate, underscoring his status as an emerging top-tier contender in the crowded 2016 race.

On a two-day, five-stop swing that took him from Sioux City to Dubuque County, Cruz was greeted by enthusiastic crowds packed into stuffy auditoriums and large ballrooms. Sporting a wireless microphone, he has honed his primary pitch to voters — it involves a lot of gesticulating — and looks more comfortable on the trail than before. He chuckles after his own jokes and a self-satisfied smile came each time the crowd applauded or shouted "Amen" after he called for the repeal of Obamacare or the Common Core education standards.

Cruz is the first major presidential contender to announce his candidacy, and he is having a moment. He has broken into the top tier of candidates, according to recent polls — including a Washington Post-ABC News survey this week showing him trailing only Jeb Bush among Republicans and GOP-leaning independents.

Cruz is also surprising many with his ability to raise money, pulling in \$4 million during the first eight days of his campaign. The majority of the contributions came from small-dollar donations, while 300 donors maxed out on their contributions.

This weekend, the campaign [purchased television advertising time](#) nationally on Fox News during "Killing Jesus," a documentary-style adaptation of Bill O'Reilly's book, and statewide in Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire and South Carolina during NBC's "A.D.: The Bible Continues" on Easter Sunday.

"We're trying to lock in those gains now and communicate about the message," a Cruz adviser said.

Cruz's ad, which speaks of the "transformative love of Jesus Christ," illustrates his campaign's focus on courting voters who are motivated by faith, including evangelicals here in Iowa, Catholics in New Hampshire and Southern Baptists in South Carolina. He calls for a "grass-roots

army” of conservatives to support him and talks about broadening his appeal to libertarians and so-called “Reagan Democrats.”

Cruz spent a good deal of time on the trail talking about religious freedom, praising a law passed in Indiana aimed at shielding businesses from having to participate in same-sex weddings.

“I’m sorry to say it has not been a profile in courage seeing some of the leaders running and scurrying” to change the legislation, he said. “Defending religious liberty is not a fringe view, it is a basic American value.”

Cruz is making defending things, from the Constitution to values, a centerpiece of his campaign, casting himself as a solitary figure who relishes fighting and leading in a way other likely challengers do not.

“How many of those issues have those individuals stood up and led?” Cruz said in Sioux City when asked how he will show he has enough executive experience to be president. “For most of them you can find one issue, maybe two.”

At the same time, Cruz has been loath to hit at other prospective candidates by name, calling them friends or people he respects. He did poke Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) for voting not to overhaul a surveillance program that collects bulk records of phone calls.

He has also emphasized his hawkish views on foreign policy, castigating the framework for an Iranian nuclear deal reached this week and vowing to root out Islamic extremism.

Cruz’s appearances often have the feel of a revival meeting, and they seemed even more upbeat than usual this week, with crowds yelling “yes,” “that’s right” and “Amen” after he made a point.

In Des Moines, a man in a shirt with American flags printed on it loudly praised Cruz after he said he bucked George W. Bush on an issue, and others guffawed when he talked about his precocious daughter or took a dig at Vice President Biden.

Cruz’s wife, Heidi, was just as popular as her husband. Throngs of voters lined up to meet her after Cruz’s speeches, asking her to pose for photos or sign books.

Many in the crowds said they were coming to check out Cruz because they like him and are intrigued by his staunch conservatism. Others said they have already made up their minds to support him.

Many also asked pointed questions, including two people at different locations who asked Cruz how he would handle undocumented immigrants who remain in the country. Cruz, who decries President Obama’s executive action on immigration reform as “illegal amnesty,” said the answer is to first secure the border then “have a discussion” about what to do with people who remain.

Bob Eft of Waterloo said he likes what Cruz had to say, but is concerned that he’s not going to raise enough money to stay in the race. A man standing next to him chimed in.

“I think he’s real. I really do,” said Danny Michael, also of Waterloo. “You know why? Because the other guys hate him.”

Adam Vandall, 34, said he is fully behind Cruz’s campaign and has never supported a candidate this early in the process.

Motioning to a packed ballroom at a Holiday Inn next to the Des Moines airport, Vandall asked, “How many presidential candidates 10, 11 months out from the caucus have this big of a crowd?”

MAY:

BAPTIST PRESS: Immigration award presented to ERLC's Duke

By Tom Strobe

May 11, 2015

<http://www.bpnews.net/44732/immigration-award-presented-to-erlcs-duke>

HOUSTON (BP) -- To receive an award for working on behalf of immigration reform proved a double blessing for Southern Baptist public policy specialist Barrett Duke.

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) presented the inaugural Robert Gittelsohn Immigration Advocacy Award to Duke April 29 during its national convention in Houston.

"It was a tremendous honor to receive an award named after my good friend Robert Gittelsohn," Duke told Baptist Press. "That honor was multiplied many fold because it was given to me by the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. I appreciate Samuel Rodriguez and all the good men and women of the NHCLC. It is a pleasure working with them."

Duke has advocated for a just immigration reform plan for years in his role as vice president for public policy and research with the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). Rodriguez, the NHCLC's president, presented Duke with the award, which was named in memory of another persistent advocate for immigration reform.

Gittelsohn, 54, died in August after years of traveling from California to Washington, D.C., to promote a legislative solution to the country's illegal immigration problem. He formed an organization, Conservatives for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, and served as the NHCLC's vice president for government affairs.

Rodriguez commended both Gittelsohn and Duke for their work on behalf of an issue that is a priority for the NHCLC, the country's largest Hispanic evangelical organization.

"Robert Gittelsohn was a tireless advocate on comprehensive immigration reform, always thinking about the political ramifications, the moral consequences and the personal stories surrounding this vital issue," Rodriguez said in a written statement for BP.

"Barrett Duke, through his work at the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, has championed these same ideals and worked to educate others on the need for comprehensive immigration policy that offers dignity, compassion and shows respect for the law."

Duke received the award at a time when immigration reform has taken a backseat to other issues. Though widespread agreement exists that America's immigration system is badly damaged, resolving the problem has escaped lawmakers so far. The system and its enforcement have resulted in an estimated 11 to 12 million undocumented immigrants living illegally in the United States.

He has not given up hope that Congress and the White House will craft a solution, Duke said. "I believe immigration reform is still possible, even in our nation's divided capital," he told BP. He looks forward to continuing to partner with the NHCLC "to finally bring our country to resolve our national immigration dilemma," Duke said. "The ERLC will continue to do its part, along with many other like-minded organizations to achieve this worthy goal."

Duke served as a panelist during a discussion on immigration reform at the three-day NHCLC event. ERLC President Russell Moore also spoke at the convention.

The ERLC has called for reform that would provide border and workplace security; uphold the rule of law; respect family unity; and establish a path to legal status to those who want to live in this country permanently and are willing to pay penalties and meet the requirements.

In 2011, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Phoenix approved a resolution on immigration reform that called for the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus while pursuing justice and compassion. The measure urged the government to make a priority of border security and holding businesses accountable in their hiring. It also requested that public officials establish after securing the borders "a just and compassionate path to legal status, with appropriate restitutionary measures, for those undocumented immigrants already living in our country." It specified the resolution was not to be interpreted as supporting amnesty.

In the last congressional session, the Senate passed comprehensive immigration legislation, which the ERLC said needed some repair work. The House of Representatives refused to vote on the Senate bill, choosing to address the issue in piecemeal measures that did not become law.

President Obama issued executive orders in November over the House leadership's protests.

Those orders included most controversially a plan to protect an estimated five million undocumented immigrants from deportation. That order applied to illegal immigrants who had

been in the country for more than five years and are parents of either U.S. citizens or "lawful permanent residents." Those who qualify are required to register, pass criminal and national security background checks, and pay taxes, according to the White House.

BAPTIST STANDARD: Analysis: Senate bill could deny dream to Hispanic students

By Leah Holder

May 15, 2015

<https://www.baptiststandard.com/news/texas/17798-analysis-senate-bill-could-deny-dream-to-hispanic-students>

AUSTIN—Texas Baptists' significant and growing investment in the education of Hispanic youth will be counteracted—and the doors to higher education closed to many Hispanic students—if a Senate bill passes that would repeal the Texas DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act.

SB 1819 by Texas state capitol300A number of bills before the Texas Legislature prompted responses from Texas Baptists. Donna Campbell, R-New Braunfels, Brandon Creighton, R-Beaumont, and Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham, would amend state law so undocumented students could not be considered residents of Texas for the purposes of receiving in-state tuition at a public institution of higher education. Undocumented students who currently receive in-state tuition at a public institution of higher education with at least 30 hours of credit before the 2015-16 academic year would be exempt from the changes.

SB 1819 also ensures institutions of higher education may establish a policy—enforced in a fair and consistent manner—to require a person for whom a residency determination is being made to submit specific documentation to verify the person is authorized to be present in the United States.

“Removing the benefit of in-state tuition rates for undocumented students will place a college education even further beyond their reach, and this negatively affects all of us,” said Gabriel Cortes, director of Texas Baptists' Hispanic Education Initiative. gabriel cortez130Gabriel Cortes “Our goal, then, should be to provide as much incentive as possible for our students to graduate high school and college, plus become productive members of our society. Accessibility and affordability are critical to this.”

Brenda Kirk, Texas church mobilizer for the Evangelical Immigration Table, frames the issue in terms of justice.

“In the United States of America, there is no place in our legal system that holds a child culpable for the actions and decisions of an adult, except in our immigration laws,” she said. “Therefore, to punish and/or restrict access to education is both inappropriate and not in the best interest of our state.”

In nearly every Texas community college and university, capacity exceeds enrollment, and the Texas Association of Business—as well as employers throughout the state—recognize the need for an educated workforce, Kirk noted.

“For these reasons alone, we should uphold the current right for a student that has completed two years of high school in Texas the opportunity for in-state tuition,” she said.

House bills

Two bills in the Texas House—HB 3587 by Rep. Scott Turner, R-Frisco, and HB 209 by Rep. Jonathan Strickland, R-Bedford—also relate to public institutions of higher education determining students' immigration/resident status. Both were referred to the House State Affairs Committee.

Cortes views Hispanic education as an issue that should be a priority for all Christians in the United States, but particularly in Texas.

“It's about breaking cycles and helping people reach the potential for which they were created,” he said. “Due to the fact that Hispanics will soon be a majority in Texas, helping Hispanics reach

their educational potential should be at the top of the agenda, if we want our families, churches and communities to thrive, not only survive, in the future.”

Texas Baptists have responded to the challenge through the Hispanic Education Initiative, he noted. The initiative provides information and resources to parents and students in order to encourage high school graduation, admittance to college and completion of a college education. Providing resources

The Hispanic Education Initiative also:

- Provides an opportunity for students to go through a GED—high school equivalency—online preparatory course in English or Spanish at no cost to them.
- Raises money and awards \$1,000 scholarships to students belonging to churches affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.
- Sponsors a Hispanic summer missionary program focused on guiding students and their parents in attaining educational goals.
- Promotes a parenting course called Raising Highly Capable Kids, designed to help parents assist their children and youth to reach their educational potential. This program can be offered in churches and community centers, but also in public schools.

Another bill, SB 185 by Charles Perry, R-Lubbock, would ban so-called “sanctuary city” policies that prohibit local law enforcement from inquiring about a person’s immigration status. These policies often also prohibit the sharing of information regarding a person’s immigration status with the federal government.

SB 185 would prohibit municipalities and other local governments from adopting such policies and cut off state funding for governments that failed to comply. It would give entities found out of compliance 90 days to change policies after they were informed they were in violation. It would not apply to commissioned peace officers hired by school districts or open-enrollment charter schools, and it exempts victims or witnesses to crimes.

Danger of racial profiling

During a public hearing on the bill before the Senate Subcommittee on Border Security, several religious leaders—including some Texas Baptists—warned it could lead to racial profiling and break down trust between communities and law enforcement.

Kirk opposes SB 185, saying: “I think we should leave enforcement of immigration laws and policies to federal officers, allowing our underfunded local police officers to focus on community-oriented policing. The role of protecting community safety is undermined when victims and witnesses are fearful to report crime due to their status.”

A bill in the Texas House, HB 592 by Matt Krause, R-Fort Worth, also relates to law enforcement agencies verifying the immigration status of detained/arrested persons. It was referred to the House State Affairs Committee.

Kirk noted the word for “immigrant” appears 92 times in the Old Testament, and Matthew’s Gospel in the New Testament teaches Jesus identifies with the “least” and most vulnerable, including strangers in a foreign land.

“The Bible is not silent on the issue of our responsibility to welcome the stranger,” she said. “We have a moral obligation to address the needs and circumstances of immigrants in our country. ... We should stand ready to support legislation that reflects our Christian values and builds the common good.”

Leah Holder served this semester as a public policy research intern with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Standard. The internship was made possible by a grant from the Christ is Our Salvation Foundation of Waco. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and is a student in the University of Texas School of Law.

CSPAN: Evangelical Voters and the 2016 Elections

May 11, 2015

<http://www.c-span.org/video/?325867-4/washington-journal-russell-moore-evangelical-voters-2016-elections>

Russell Moore talked about the role evangelical voters might play in the 2016 elections. Topics included issues such as same-sex marriage, the role of faith and religion in public life, and abortion.

[Russell Moore](#) President Southern Baptist Convention->Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

[Bill Scanlan](#) Host C-SPAN

CRCNA NETWORK: Immigration Preaching Challenge

By Kris Van Engen

May 7, 2015

<http://dojustice.crcna.org/article/immigration-preaching-challenge>

The theme of immigration is woven throughout the biblical narrative. However, only 16 percent of evangelicals have ever heard about immigration in church. As a result, fewer than 10 percent report that they think about immigration primarily from the perspective of their faith. Have you ever talked about immigration from the pulpit? We encourage you to participate in the Immigration Preaching Challenge. **Keep reading to learn more about the contest, discover immigration resources, and learn how you can incorporate immigration into your preaching.**

So where does immigration appear in the Bible?

- Immigrants appear throughout Scripture:
 - Abraham left his homeland for the land God would show him, promising to bless him and all other peoples through him.
 - Joseph was a victim of human trafficking, sold as a slave.
 - Naomi was forced to flee her homeland because of famine, and Ruth returned with her when God provided food again.
 - Mary and Joseph brought their baby, Jesus, across several borders to Egypt to avoid Herod's murderous intentions.
- Immigrants are created in God's image.
- God tells the people of Israel, time and time again, to "welcome the stranger, for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt."
- Hospitality, particularly to the stranger, is a theme in both the Old and New Testaments, and it's a central theme of Jesus' ministry. The Greek word for hospitality is *philoxenia*, meaning "love of the other."
- The treatment of immigrants in our midst is a relevant application for numerous biblical themes--stewardship, grace, biblical justice, evangelism, fellowship, unity, hospitality, the role of government, reconciliation, power, sin.

Still, immigrants find themselves on the margins. Society projects its struggles onto new immigrants. [Xenophobia](#), stigma, and myth tend to color the reception of newcomers. A quick study of the history of U.S. immigration policy reveals that misinformation has resulted in harmful immigration laws that are [not based on reality](#). The majority of new immigrants are Christians--and when one part of the body suffers, we all suffer.

Preaching about immigration is a way in which we can respond to God's call to be truth tellers, to make the gospel relevant to our context today, and to be aware of the burdens that the body of Christ is bearing in our midst. **Your congregation is hearing about immigration from lots of places--but they need most to hear about it from you.**

Take the challenge! Submit a recording (with a written outline) or a complete manuscript of a sermon you preached about immigration to osjha@crcna.org by September 30, 2015. (Questions can be directed to that address as well.)

Sermon entries are expected to

- allow the Scripture text to lead the message.
- explicitly address modern immigration issues and their relationship to biblical justice, especially including local illustrations or effects of policy on local community.
- highlight the truth and hope of the good news of Jesus Christ.
- include practical “what you can do” applications.
- have been preached, preferably at a CRC or RCA congregation.

Sermons start with Scripture and speak an interpretation of Scripture that is relevant to one’s cultural context. We hope, as you pay attention to the real stories and facts of immigrants without legal status across the U.S., that you will find Scripture has a relevant word for this broken situation.

While you’re preparing your sermon, check out these these illustrations and stories for inspiration:

For additional cultural context, visit the [OSJ immigration web page](#) for resources, including a list of Bible references, mythbusters, and book suggestions. The [Immigration Policy Center](#) and [g92.org](#) are also great resources. For immigration information and resources in Canada, visit the [Centre for Public Dialogue](#).

Juried prize: To celebrate your work, a panel of judges will offer \$250 for first place, \$150 for second place, and \$100 for third place. A small gift card will be awarded to all participants.

People’s Choice award: Through social media, we’ll allow our followers to vote for the sermon that helped them think about immigration in a new way. The winner of the most votes will receive a \$250 award.

All submissions will be posted online. People will then cast their votes, and both the people’s choice and juried prize winners will be announced on October 30, 2015.

Panel of Judges: Rudy Gonzalez, Thyra Van Keeken, Jose Macias

CHRISTIAN POST (Carroll Rodas Op-Ed): Evangelicals Are Hungry for Leadership, Teaching on Immigration

By Daniel Carroll Rodas, CP Guest Contributor

May 6, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/evangelicals-are-hungry-for-leadership-teaching-on-immigration-138756/>

Most Evangelicals want to learn more about what the Bible can teach us about immigration. Will pastors meet this challenge?

The past few months have been frustrating for those of us who support comprehensive immigration reform. But for Christians who believe that Scripture compels us to seek more just immigration policies, recent polling offers hope and inspires us to redouble our efforts.

It is understandable that we feel discouraged. Once again, Congress is at a stalemate.

Republicans continue with the desire to neutralize President Obama's executive action of late November last year or to eliminate provisions one-by-one. Meanwhile, a U.S. district judge in Texas has placed a preliminary injunction on the implementation of part of that presidential order designed to temporarily remove the threat of deportation.

Clearly, this is all messy business, and whatever unfolds inevitably will generate yet more anger and ill will. Many of those who do not have legal status continue to lose trust in this country's legal system, as well as its legislative and political system.

Two experiences, however, have given me energy to keep working to make a difference — one grounded in faith commitments, the other focused largely on local efforts by advocacy groups. On March 4 national evangelical leaders who head up educational institutions, denominations, or ministries, gathered in Atlanta to ask, "Where do we go from here?" Discussions based on faith commitments and experiences from around the country reminded all those attending that a divine mandate shines through, whatever the sociocultural situation might project.

Therein also lies the challenge. Recent polling by LifeWay Research reveals how minimal is the influence of the biblical material on migration within evangelical local churches and on personal views. In other words, there is still much work for us to do at the grassroots level. What lies before us, then, is not only to look for signs of hope. We must get back to the task of sharing what God has to say in the Bible about migration and immigrants.

This LifeWay Research [polling](#) revealed a community willing to listen: Among the 1,000 evangelicals surveyed, 68 percent said they would like to hear a sermon focused on how biblical principles apply to immigration issues—the same percentage that said their church never had encouraged them to reach out to immigrants.

A strong majority support immigration reform that follows biblical principles: 82 percent of those surveyed support immigration reform that respects an individual's God-given dignity, and 72 percent say reform should respect the unity of the immediate family. Respondents also want reform to ensure border security and fairness to taxpayers. Notably, 61 percent say it should establish a path to legal status and/or citizenship for undocumented immigrants who meet certain requirements.

Exactly one week after the gathering in Atlanta, I attended a meeting called by a U.S. representative from the metro-Denver area who was in town during a recess from Washington. Although some faith leaders were present, those who spoke up more were representatives from advocacy groups that are involved in helping immigrants with various kinds of legal advice. To watch this was a reminder again that, even though there is much to do in the nation's capital, individuals and families need help in the here and now. It reinforced the need to focus on the grassroots, and the importance of people of faith learning to work with and learn from people within the secular realm.

Where do we go from here? We move forward, with God's help and hand-in-hand with others. A good start will be to reach out to the evangelical Christians in the pews who want to hear from their pastors and other leaders.

The more evangelical Christians who connect with immigrants and immigration through the Bible and their church, the better the prospects will be for an immigration conversation that qualifies as biblical, not just political. That possibility should inspire us and give us hope.

M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, Ph.D., is a Distinguished Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary. He is the author of Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible. A version of this piece first appeared on his blog.

CHRISTIAN POST: Immigrants 'Held Captive by Political Expediency,' Hispanic Evangelical Leader Says About Recent Court Decision Against Obama Immigration Plan

By Michael Gryboski , Christian Post Reporter

May 27, 2015

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/immigrants-held-captive-by-political-expediency-hispanic-evangelical-leader-says-about-recent-court-decision-against-obama-immigration-plan-139620/>

The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, told The Christian Post that a recent three judge panel decision against the Obama Administration's immigration policy executive action mean many immigrants will continue to suffer as political leaders struggle to resolve their differences on immigration reform.

A panel from an appeals court has denied the Obama Administration's request to lift an injunction barring the president's controversial immigration executive order from taking effect. In a 2-1 ruling, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of the Appeals denied the Justice Department's request to lift an injunction given to Texas and 25 other states suing the Administration over the executive action.

"The current action of the court regarding immigration only exist as a result of the prolonged

inaction by Congress. While the White House and the judicial branch continue to go back and forth, millions of individuals created in God's image continue to be held captive by political expediency," said Rev. Rodriguez.

"If only Congress can reconcile conviction with courage and pass legislation that will secure our borders, stop illegal immigration and provide a pathway to integrate those currently here in a non-amnesty manner where citizenship is earned while family unity stands secured. "

At the center of the suit was the federal government's Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents program, or DAPA.

"Because the government is unlikely to succeed on the merits of its appeal of the injunction, we deny the motion for stay and the request to narrow the scope of the injunction," [read the decision](#).

"[The federal government] claims that the injunction offends separation of powers and federalism, but it is the resolution of the case on the merits, not whether the injunction is stayed pending appeal, that will affect those principles."

In November of 2014, President Barack Obama issued an executive action meant to safeguard an estimated four million undocumented immigrants from deportation.

In a 15-minute televised address, Obama said his immigration plan will give four million people eligibility for a new legal status that temporarily prevents them from being deported and allows them to work.

[Obama added](#) that an additional one million people will also have a level of legal protection from deportation through other parts of his plan.

A major focus of the immigration plan was the children of those who entered the country illegally but were born or spent nearly all of their lives in the United States.

Often called Dreamers, under the plan teenagers and young adults could apply for protection from deportation and also have opportunity for legal employment.

Supporters considered the move a step in the right direction for immigration reform while critics charged that it was unconstitutional, with 26 states led by Texas suing the government over the matter.

The Evangelical Immigration Table, a broad coalition of evangelical organizations and leaders who lobby for immigration reform, expressed divided positions on the Obama plan.

Rodriguez, who also serves as one of the leaders of the EIT, praised Obama's decision [in a statement](#) released not long after the announcement.

"The President's executive action, although not the preferable delivery mechanism, initiates a reconciliatory prescription necessary in addressing a defacto humanitarian crisis within our borders: millions of God's children created in his image living in the shadows," said Rodriguez. Russell Moore, president of The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and an EIT leader, denounced the executive order in a column.

"I disagree with President Barack Obama's decision to act unilaterally on immigration policy. I am for immigration reform, for all sorts of reasons that I have outlined elsewhere," [wrote Moore](#).

"It's because of my support for immigrants and for immigration reform that I think President Obama's executive actions are the wrong thing to do."

In February, U.S. District Court Judge Andrew S. Hanen of the Southern District of Texas, Brownsville Division, [granted the states a preliminary injunction against DAPA](#).

"This Court ... finds that at least Texas has satisfied the necessary standing requirements that the Defendants have clearly legislated a substantive rule without complying with the procedural requirements under the Administration Procedure Act," wrote Judge Hanen.

The White House denounced the Hanen decision and vowed to appeal the injunction, saying in a statement released February that the judge's ruling "wrongly prevents these lawful, commonsense policies from taking effect."

"The Supreme Court and Congress have made clear that the federal government can set priorities in enforcing our immigration laws — which is exactly what the President did when he announced commonsense policies to help fix our broken," [continued the statement](#).

The American Center for Law and Justice, which filed an amicus brief on behalf of Texas et. al., hailed the Fifth Circuit panel's decision to maintain the injunction.

"We at the ACLJ are extremely pleased that the appeals court reached this very reasonable and sound decision," [wrote Jay Sekulow of ACLJ](#).

"We're confident the court ultimately will conclude that President Obama's overreach, in effect, changed the law — a violation of the separation of powers."

CHRISTIANITY TODAY: Go Where People Are Hurting

Interview by David Swanson

May 4, 2015

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/may/go-where-people-are-hurting.html>

Noel Castellanos, CEO of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), knows about ministry to underserved communities, having served for more than 30 years in urban Latino neighborhoods. In *Where the Cross Meets the Street: What Happens to the Neighborhood When God Is at the Center* (InterVarsity Press), Castellanos shows how ministries can address inequality and injustice without forsaking evangelism and discipleship. David Swanson, pastor of Chicago's New Community Covenant Church, spoke with Castellanos about forging faith and community at society's margins.

You write, "We can no longer maintain our old paradigms of ministry that compartmentalize and truncate the work of the kingdom." How does this principle guide your work?

In most evangelical churches, evangelism and discipleship are the bread and butter. But to bring the full gospel to poor and marginalized communities, we need further tools.

CCDA's biblical framework begins from a foundation of *proclamation* and *formation*. But from my experience in urban and Latino communities, I learned that we needed to put *compassion* front and center. Compassion is a language Christians can understand in our hurting world: the need for a cup of water, clothing, shelter, or some other practical form of love.

We want to help create economic opportunity—to teach people how to fish, and even to own the pond. We want to restore dignity by restoring the ability to care for oneself and one's family.

As I got involved with the struggle for immigration reform in the United States, I realized that confronting injustice would be essential.

Where can churches look for examples of putting the full gospel into action?

Think of the black church and the way leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. read the Bible from a different perspective, giving new meaning to words like *liberation* and *reconciliation*. The black church's mobilization and involvement in justice work has influenced the Latino community as we have begun to mobilize on issues of immigration and poverty. I hope we can learn from the black church's experience without losing our fervor for evangelism.

What happens when the cross meets the suburban, middle-class street?

Everywhere you go, you find hurting people. You have to get beyond the gated community and move toward the margins.

When I worked with Young Life, I once ministered at a high school in a wealthy part of Spokane, Washington. The school had an influx of Laotian refugees. You could see from the way they were treated that these kids were outcasts. Because of my own upbringing as an outsider, I saw that I had to reach out.

At Young Life we talked about *incarnational ministry*. It meant entering the world of young people relationally. The more I've reflected on Scripture, the ministry of Jesus, and the radical idea of God coming to earth in human flesh, the more I've realized that effective ministry must be incarnational.

We often think of racial reconciliation as a black–white issue. As someone who is neither, how do you approach this?

When I arrived at CCDA, black-and-white was definitely the assumed way of framing reconciliation. At the first meeting I attended on reconciliation, there was one other Latino person. And my experience with Young Life, as the first full-time Latino staff member, was similar. But it's not enough to be upset; you have to step up and lead in order to create change. We're committed to including Native Americans, Asians, and others who have been on the margins.

Are you optimistic about immigration reform in the United States?

I feel hopeful—but discouraged about the pace. I'm encouraged when I think of how long it took the abolitionist movement to succeed. Whether change happens is outside my control, but I can't sit on the sideline saying that reform is too hard or taking too long.

I sometimes fear, though, that it's easier to protest or write a senator than to invest time in redeveloping a neighborhood. While we're working to make changes in Washington, we have to keep doing the work of loving our neighbor.

LATIN POST: Jeb Bush on Immigration: Bush Welcomes 'Earned' Legal Status for 11 Million US Immigrants

By [Michael Oleaga](#)

May 01, 2015

<http://www.latinpost.com/articles/50814/20150501/jeb-bush-immigration-welcomes-earned-legal-status-11-million-immigrants.htm>

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush said the 11 million U.S. immigrants deserve an "earned legal status," but his comments on immigration have drawn ire from groups.

On Tuesday, Bush, a likely Republican presidential candidate, visited Puerto Rico said, "I know the power of the immigrant experience because I live it each and every day."

The Texas Democratic Party, however, criticized Bush's comment as he was set to address the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), a Latino evangelical group, on Wednesday afternoon.

"Jeb Bush's comments are offensive to people who have actually lived the immigrant experience," said Texas Democratic Party Communications Manager Javier Gamboa, an immigrant beneficiary of the Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

"Jeb Bush has never had to wait in line for a green card. He has never lived under the fear of being ripped from his family by deportation," continued Gamboa. "As the son and brother of two former U.S. Presidents, I'm not sure what Jeb Bush means by his 'immigrant experience.' Jeb doesn't speak for immigrants and he certainly doesn't speak for me."

At the NHCLC, Bush again commented on immigration and recognized the U.S. as a nation of immigrants.

"This is not the time to abandon something that makes us special and unique," said Bush in Houston.

"We have the ability, because of immigration, to be an emerging country again, to be full of optimism. ... But we have to fix a broken immigration system and do it in short order," said Bush. Bush said the U.S. immigration system has to improve by making the legal immigration process easier and dealing with the 11 million immigrants who should "come out of the shadows." According to Bush, the 11 million immigrants should have an "earned legal status" path, pay a fine, not receive government assistance and then "over a period of time" earn legal status.

"This country does not do well when people lurk in the shadows," Bush said.

Bush addressed attendees in both English and Spanish. He spoke about meeting his Mexico-born wife Columba Garnica Gallo when she was 16 years old during a foreign exchange program he participated in 1970.

As [Latin Post reported](#), Public Policy Polling (PPP) released a new poll from Iowa showing Bush in third place behind Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida. In regards to favorable reviews, Bush encountered mixed results. While 38 percent of Republicans gave him a favorable rating, 37 percent had an unfavorable view of the former Florida governor. Twenty-five percent of respondents were not sure.

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL (Vining Letter): Walker and immigration reform

By Jim Vining

May 2, 2015

<http://m.jsonline.com/opinion/letters-b99491282z1-302256561.html>

My pastoral work introduced me to state and national networks of evangelicals who pray and work for comprehensive immigration reform.

These believers unapologetically approach immigration with scripture as a moral compass and carefully research the issue beyond popular talking points. They propose that the biblical principles to "welcome the stranger" can foster policies that value of life, family, prosperity and security. The biggest challenge they find to reconciling biblical principles with modern policy is the political games around immigration. But as more than one evangelical has told me, it is better to follow your moral compass than to play politics.

This is why so many of us were disappointed when professed evangelical Gov. Scott Walker made a radical shift on immigration. The governor has long affirmed the kinds of reasonable, fair and moral immigration reforms advocated by evangelical groups. Now, it seems that in an effort to secure the support of the fringe of his party in a bid for the presidency, the governor made a radical shift to embrace the most extreme immigration policies. We hope the governor will reconsider.

We are looking for leaders who follow their moral compass rather than play political games.

Jim Vining

Wauwatosa

MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER (Cross Op-Ed): Sessions wrong about immigration's impact

By Alan Cross

May 15, 2015

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/05/15/sessions-wrong-immigrations-impact/27378259/>

Sen. Jeff Sessions wrote a recent op-ed for the *Washington Post* headlined "America needs to curb immigration flows." He was not talking about *illegal* immigration. He was talking about *legal* immigration.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Immigration subcommittee, our senator's view is significant. If there are good reasons to curb the flow of immigration to America, though, Sen. Sessions does not provide us with any. As a matter of fact, his main argument against immigration is historically flawed and a non sequitur.

I have voted for Sen. Sessions multiple times and am a supporter of his. But I believe that he is wrong to blame legal immigrants for economic stagnation.

Sen. Sessions tells us that *legal* immigrants are hurting the American economy, are taking jobs from American workers, and are depressing wages. However, he makes his case using false comparisons.

He says that the restrictions placed on immigration from 1930 till the mid-1960s helped usher in a boom for the American middle class where "real median compensation for U.S. workers surged, increasing more than 90 percent from 1948 to 1973, according to the Economic Policy

Institute." He then goes on to say that after the number of legal immigrants began to rise, wages for the American middle class began to stagnate.

His premise is that the more foreign-born workers we have in America, the more stagnant our economy will be, which will hurt the prospects of American-born workers.

However, something else significant happened in America from 1948 to 1973 that caused the American economy to explode and it had nothing to do with immigration controls. America had just won World War II, and for several decades we were the dominant economic power in the world without compare.

Also, we were experiencing the Baby Boom and cities were being expanded, the Interstate Highway system was linking America, and technological advances were accelerating at an astounding rate. We were experiencing a post-war boom that benefited the entire nation. Tying our economic expansion during this period to an absence of immigrants is poor history and it is a poor way to make a case. By the early 1970s, the labor market was flooded with a massive generation of Baby Boomers going to work in addition to women entering the workforce en masse. There are just too many other factors going on to draw the conclusions that Sen. Sessions does.

In reality, there is strong evidence that makes the opposite case. Multiple economic studies have refuted Sen. Sessions' premise point-by-point (Nowrasteh, Cato Institute; McLaren, UVA; Hong, Indiana) and point to a rise in economic growth associated with an increase in immigration. At the very least, we can see that larger foreign born populations are often an indicator of a healthy economy instead of being a drag on it.

For example, Texas has the 14th lowest unemployment rate in the country at 4.2 percent and a foreign-born population of 16.5 percent, the 7th highest in the U.S. Meanwhile, Alabama is ranked 31st with a 5.7 percent unemployment rate while only 3.4 percent of its population is foreign-born (43rd) and Mississippi is ranked 49th with 6.8 percent unemployment and a meager 2.1 percent of its population is foreign-born (49th).

If Sen. Sessions' premise were true, then we could expect the economies of Alabama and Mississippi to be better than Texas. But Texas was just ranked the No. 1 state for business development by chiefexecutive.net, while Alabama was ranked 24th and Mississippi was ranked 39th. There are clearly other factors at work.

We are a nation of immigrants. As a Christian, I believe that each immigrant is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), which implies both inherent dignity *and* remarkable potential. Historically, we have seen immigrants strengthen our great nation, and almost all economists agree that their continued arrival will have a net positive impact on our economy.

America is facing a lot of problems, but the presence of hard-working, skilled, and *legal* immigrants who contribute to our communities, pay taxes, and join in the American Dream is not one of them.

Alan Cross is pastor of Gateway Baptist Church in Montgomery and author of "When Heaven and Earth Collide: Racism, Southern Evangelicals, and the Better Way of Jesus," published by NewSouth Books.

NATIONAL REVIEW: Will Evangelicals Propel Another Bush to Victory in South Carolina?

By Jim Geraghty

May 26, 2015

<http://www.nationalreview.com/article/418844/will-evangelicals-propel-another-bush-victory-south-carolina-jim-geraghty>

As part of an effort to win over South Carolina's evangelical leaders, Jeb Bush held a private breakfast meeting on May 2 with a group of about 40 pastors in Greenville.

"Governor Bush did himself a lot of good that week," says a veteran of South Carolina politics, currently not backing any of the 2016 contenders, who was in the room. "He talked about his

faith and Jesus Christ, and it was compelling to the pastors there. They weren't all rushing up to sign on with him, but he came across as a serious guy who had really thought through issues of faith."

One of the ministers in the room was Al Phillips, the director of missions at the Greenville Baptist Association.

"He said he had made a commitment of his life to Christ. I have, too, so I understand what he meant by that," Phillips says. "I felt that the humility and authenticity I sensed from him came from his relationship with Christ. The fact that he practices his faith in the Catholic Church does not matter to me, as long as he has a faith relationship with Christ."

Phillips said although Bush made a good impression, he has not yet decided on a candidate for 2016.

His reaction was similar to that of [Jason Lee, director of World Relief Spartanburg](#), the local office of an international Christian organization that works to help refugees find new homes. "He shared about his relationship with Christ, his conversion, and about his prayer and Bible reading," Lee said. "As one who has been a minister over 18 years, he seemed honest and genuine about it, and I think most were encouraged by his answers and refreshed that he took questions about his faith."

"I don't know that the meeting changed my perception of the governor, but it made me more informed, as it was the first chance I had to hear him in person," Lee says.

"As Governor Bush explores the possibility of running for president, he's reached out to the faith community," says Matt Gorman, a Bush spokesman. "Governor Bush's faith is an important part of his life. He looks forward to talking about his record as a conservative governor with folks across the country."

Bush's past support for a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants — which many conservatives view as tantamount to supporting amnesty — is a serious liability in some Republican circles, but may help him with some Christian leaders.

Bush's past support for a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants is a serious liability in some Republican circles, but may help him with some Christian leaders.

"I was also glad to hear him talk about immigration," Lee says. "While it is an issue he may have taken some heat on in the past, I think that is unjustifiable since he seems to be one of the few GOP candidates to actually take a position on it — while others seem to waffle."

Lee says Bush's views generally line up with the Evangelical community's views on immigration reform. He points to a March survey conducted by Nashville-based [LifeWay Research](#). That poll found that 86 percent of Evangelicals want more border security and 61 percent support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. 72 percent wanted to "protect the unity of immigrant families" and 82 percent wanted a policy that would "respect people's God-given dignity."

A week after the meeting with pastors, Bush gave the commencement address at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., where he [further elaborated](#) on his views about religious liberty and the role of the state:

There are consequences when you don't genuflect to the latest secular dogmas. And those dogmas can be hard to keep up with. So we find officials in a major city demanding that pastors turn over copies of their sermons. Or federal judges mistaking themselves for elected legislators, and imposing restrictions and rights that do not exist in the Constitution. Or an agency dictating to a Catholic charity, the Little Sisters of the Poor, what has to go in their health plan — and never mind objections of conscience.

That case continues, and as usual the present administration is supporting the use of coercive federal power. What should be easy calls, in favor of religious freedom, have instead become an aggressive stance against it. Somebody here is being small-minded and intolerant, and it sure isn't the nuns, ministers, and laymen and -women who ask only to live and practice their faith.

Federal authorities are demanding obedience, in complete disregard of religious conscience — and in a free society, the answer is no.

Perhaps it shouldn't be so surprising that Jeb Bush sees this demographic as a potential strength in a Republican primary. After all, both evangelical Christians and South Carolinians have been good to the Bush family in past presidential campaigns.

In 1988, when the Rev. Jerry Falwell was perhaps at the apex of his national influence, he supported George H. W. Bush, even though another key evangelical figure, Pat Robertson, was also running that year. Bush won the 1988 South Carolina primary, and his sweep of the southern states on Super Tuesday three days later all but guaranteed him the nomination. He won 81 percent of the evangelical vote against Michael Dukakis in the general election.

Falwell also supported George W. Bush in 2000, and Dubya won over many evangelicals in the 2000 campaign when, during a debate, he said that his favorite political philosopher was “Jesus Christ, because he changed my heart.” South Carolina gave Bush 43 a key victory in his hard-fought primary battle with Senator John McCain.

Jeb Bush's not-quite-official campaign knows a “Bush wins South Carolina” headline in early 2016 could be another decisive moment. Palmetto State pastors can expect a lot more breakfast invitations.

— *Jim Geraghty is the senior political correspondent for National Review.*

NEWSMAX: Christian Denominations With Most Conservative Stance on Immigration

May 7, 2015

<http://www.newsmax.com/FastFeatures/christian-immigration-conservative-stance/2015/05/06/id/643083/>

One of the most divisive topics today among conservative Christians is that of illegal immigration. Depending upon where they live, border-state dwellers tend to take a hard line against it, while Christians in other areas of the country may be more welcoming. What people are agreeing upon is that reform of some type is needed.

It is a hot topic with a wide range of opinions. This is what some of the major denominations say about it.

1. Support for granting illegal immigrants citizenship among white evangelicals is on the decline, [according to a 2014 article in *The Atlantic*](#).

Pastor Gabriel Salguero, president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, said his community leans more toward legal residency rather than full citizenship.

This trend appears to be true of all denominations, with white Protestants, minority Protestants and white Catholics all indicating that immigration reform is one of the most important issues of our time.

Race has more impact on opinion than denomination, according to a survey published by *The Atlantic*, which notes that white evangelicals with Republican leanings take a harder stance on immigration than their minority counterparts.

2. Other denominations calling for immigration reform include Catholic, Mormon and mainline Protestant leaders.

[According to a 2014 survey by the *Pew Research Center*](#), three quarters of American adults regardless of faith support illegal immigrant rights to stay in the United States.

3. While that trend clearly shows favor of immigration reform, evangelical denominations — a group of some of the most conservative believers in the nation making up several denominations — have created a statement of principles for immigration reform at the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#).

That statement supports and includes “God-given dignity of every person, protects family unity, respects the rule of law, guarantees secure national borders, ensures fairness to taxpayers and establishes a path toward legal status or citizenship for those immigrants who wish to become

legal, permanent residents.”

The signatories include Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, Eugenio Duarte, general superintendent of Church of the Nazarene, Tony Evans, senior pastor at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, and Paige Patterson, president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

4. In 2008, [the United Methodist Church called for comprehensive immigration reform](#).

They said, “We are living in a time of persecution and oppression due to ignorance and fear. There is frustration on all sides about the state of our immigration laws. We must work to channel that frustration into advocacy for the passage of a comprehensive immigration reform bill.”

5. [The Southern Baptist Convention issued a statement supporting immigration reform](#) at a meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, in 2011, and resolved, “That we affirm that while Southern Baptists, like other Americans, might disagree on how to achieve just and humane public policy objectives related to immigration, we agree that, when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to his church, the message, in every language and to every person, is “Whosoever will may come.”

OMAHA WORLD HERALD (Senkbile Letter): Driver’s license bill is good move

May 27, 2015

http://www.omaha.com/opinion/the-public-pulse-may/article_d9ea1844-bb2a-5834-8ecb-e342494072cf.html

As a pastor and local nonprofit leader who works with youth in our local community, I am glad that the Nebraska Legislature has voted to support young DACA recipients to obtain a legal way to drive.

Youth are often casualties of their context and circumstances, and we as a community should strive to give them opportunities to grow and better their lives. Helping youth from immigrant families become productive and assimilated members of our society should be embraced by the state and especially the Christian community.

Sometimes conversations around immigration can get divisive and ugly, but the willingness that our elected officials have shown to collectively work together on a piece of immigration legislation that is fair to taxpayers and provides opportunities for our community’s immigrant youth should be commended.

I hope the governor will join our elected officials and sign the bill into law.

J.D. Senkbile, Omaha

SIOUX CITY JOURNAL (Opgenorth Op-Ed): OTHER VOICES: Reforms should reflect biblical mandate to welcome immigrants

By The Rev. Jon Opgenorth

May 3, 2015

http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/opinion/columnists/other-voices-reforms-should-reflect-biblical-mandate-to-welcome-immigrants/article_9d2add4b-6818-5b60-9101-eaaee5742cc3.html

As presidential hopefuls make their way through the communities of northwest Iowa, I invite the candidates into conversation with area clergy on a matter we believe is important to faithful followers of Jesus. My colleagues include Rev. John Lee (Bethel Christian Reformed, Sioux Center), Rev. Travis Else (First Reformed, Sioux Center) and Rev. Gianni Gracia (former pastor of Amistad Christiana, Sioux Center).

Many national political observers believe that candidates, if they are to win with conservative evangelicals in Iowa, must pivot toward harsh policies and dehumanizing rhetoric regarding immigrants and immigration reform. This simply is not true.

We are conservative. We are evangelical. We believe it is time for a new approach. We are looking for a presidential leader who values all life, including the biblical mandate to welcome and love immigrants.

We are not alone. A new poll by Lifeway Research finds that seven in 10 evangelical Christians support immigration reforms including both secured borders and an earned pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Half of evangelical voters say they would be more likely to support a presidential candidate who championed these policies, while only 15 percent would be less likely to support a pro-immigration reform candidate.

In our pews every week are people with stories of lives adversely impacted by current policies. There are families torn apart by deportation. There are employers trying to comply with the law but longing for it to change. These business leaders love their immigrant employees and value their contribution to our workforce and the fabric of our communities.

We believe the Bible offers significant wisdom on this issue. There are more than 100 references in Scripture to those who are aliens, strangers and immigrants. In the Old Testament, these persons are often listed alongside widows and orphans as those for whom God's people are commanded to especially care. Jesus, by his example, was disarmingly hospitable to all. And the Apostle Paul reminded the church that we are not Jew and Gentile, slave and free, but that we are all one in Christ Jesus.

We do believe that Scripture calls us to honor the rule of law. But our current unenforceable immigration system, rather than honoring the rule of law, mocks it. No president (past or present) and no current candidate has a serious plan to deport 11 million people. That action would enforce the law but wreak havoc on our economy and lives. We need a just law that recognizes borders while creating a path to legal status for qualified individuals within our borders.

To that end, we support The Evangelical Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform, which calls for respect of the rule of law, secure borders, and recognizes the dignity of each person, keeping families together as much as possible, and offers a path toward legal status. This seems like a logical, wise and biblical middle way between mass deportation and blanket amnesty. We invite you to conversation with us, to tune out the national media voices and listen to the real voices of real Iowans.

The Rev. Jon Opgenorth is senior pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa.

SOJOURNERS (Williams Post): Birthright Citizenship: A Historic American Right In Danger

By Greg Williams

May 6, 2015

<http://sojo.net/blogs/2015/05/06/birthright-citizenship-historic-american-right-danger>

Historically, the United States has said as long as you were born here, you are from here — a principle called birthright citizenship. It doesn't matter who your parents are or what your family history is — as long as you were born on U.S. soil you are a citizen. This was codified in the 14th Amendment, which sought to finally [grant citizenship status](#) to African Americans living in the United States rather than leaving them in legal limbo.

A [hearing](#) on the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security last Wednesday explored ways to change this tradition of birthright citizenship pointing to ostensible problems with pregnant women travelling to the U.S. specifically for the purpose of giving birth as well as what the committee sees as substantial public support for moving away from it.

The problem is, moving away from birthright citizenship not only goes against the democratic ethos and traditions of the U.S. but also, as many of the members of Congress on the committee pointed out, presents serious constitutional and policy problems. Even if the constitutional

hurdles could be surmounted — which is incredibly doubtful given precedent — moving away from birthright citizenship would be a terrible policy change for the entire country.

Moving away from birthright citizenship would be unconstitutional under [most mainstream interpretations of the 14th Amendment](#), which defines a citizen as "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof."

We can always amend the Constitution, of course, or enact one of the clever legislative work-arounds, which most of the witnesses at the hearing recommended. About those legal tricks, the best that we can say is that they have not been ruled unconstitutional yet even though the historical consensus is against them.

On a purely practical level, a move away from birthright citizenship would be a logistical nightmare, creating more undocumented people living in the United States and a semi-permanent underclass with greater difficulties moving out of the shadows and trusting the government. We shouldn't move backward into a complicated bureaucracy that strands people in limbo or forces them to deal with the federal government to prove that their children have the rights of citizens.

Stateless children, who would inevitably result, are at [significantly higher risk of being trafficked](#) or having other terrible outcomes because they lack the protection of any citizenship.

In Thailand, for example, we see large communities of hill villages not being protected by the privileges of Thai citizenship and thus being vulnerable to all forms of exploitation.

Rather than seeking to increase the number of people who are undocumented in the country, which moving away from birthright citizenship would do, Congress ought to enact broad, fair, and compassionate immigration reform. We need reform that can bring people out of the margins and into the mainstream of society and a balanced and transparent rule of law rather than alienating them from it. That is the only way we can be a true, united community.

Supporting things like a path to citizenship or legal permanent status will help allay the fears of an underclass, without adding people to them. By bringing people into the light, we create a broader tax paying base which can trust law enforcement. It would even cost less and be a smaller expansion of the federal government to open up a plan for normalization than to de-citizen people in the future.

A move away from birthright citizenship would create a massive bureaucracy, with substantially more problems than exist under our current system. In 2011, the Center for American Progress highlighted these problems in greater detail in [Less than Citizens](#), showing how repealing birthright citizenship would require new mothers to prove their citizenship to a federal bureaucracy at the birth of their child and create a new class of children who do not belong in any country.

Rather than waste time on foolish, unconstitutional policy proposals that spitefully penalize, we should work for solutions which help already vulnerable people.

Greg Williams is Communications Assistant for Sojourners.

THE STATE (McAlister Op-Ed): GOP presidential candidates beware: Don't assume evangelicals are anti-immigrant

By Rev. Robbie McAlister

May 24, 2015

<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article21723708.html>

Some assume that the only way for a candidate to win in conservative states is to throw red meat to GOP primary voters in the form of anti-immigration rhetoric and hardline stances. Earlier this month, at the "Freedom Summit" in Greenville, someone actually compared immigrants to rats and roaches. As an evangelical pastor, I plead with candidates to stay away from such strategies.

Recently, I have become involved with the growing evangelical movement to welcome, love, and serve the immigrants in our midst, regardless of legal status. Most large evangelical

denominations have urged support for immigrant ministry and common-sense reforms, and several dozen pastors and leaders in the Columbia area recently met to discuss the issue. The Bible, our ultimate guide, has much to say about immigration. Throughout the Old Testament, God commands his people to “welcome the stranger” in their midst, extending the same protections that citizens enjoy. In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to offer hospitality, the Greek word for “love of strangers.” Scripture compels us to see the arrival of immigrants as an opportunity for evangelism and service, and for partnership with the many who are already Christ followers.

Our broken immigration system needs to be addressed. However, most evangelicals reject the false choice between mass deportations on one side or open borders and amnesty on the other. In fact, a recent LifeWay Research poll found that about 70 percent of evangelical Christians in the South support reforms that would include improved border security and a process whereby undocumented immigrants could pay a fine and then eventually earn citizenship. Three times more evangelicals said support for such a policy would make them “more likely to vote for a presidential candidate” than said it would deter their support. It’s no anomaly that candidates who have advocated an earned legalization process for undocumented immigrants have won every S.C. Republican presidential primary since 2000.

My message to the candidates visiting South Carolina would be this: Don’t try to win votes with extreme rhetoric about immigrants or impractical solutions to our nation’s immigration problem. Evangelicals care about immigrants as people, and we want to have an intelligent conversation about how to reform our immigration system in a way that helps our economy, secures our border and provides a way for people to get right with the law.

Rev. Robbie McAlister
Riverbend Church
Lexington

VICTORIA ADVOCATE (Texas): Immigrants left for dead remembered 12 years later

By Jessica Priest
May 16, 2015

<https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/news/2015/may/16/immigrants-left-for-dead-remembered-12-years-later/>

The pages of the Rev. Gabriel Espinosa's Bible flapped in the wind.

At times, it was hard to hear him over the roar of traffic on U.S. Highway 77 and the tractor-trailers rolling down the cracked asphalt of Fleming Prairie Road.

"I'm not sure how we're going to pull this off," Espinosa said of a Spanish Mass that was set to start noon Saturday, "but we know the wind is just a sign of the Holy Spirit."

Espinosa read from Matthew 25:31-46, also known as the Judgement of the Nations: "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Espinosa thought it was fitting because the day was not about politics, it was about memorializing the 19 immigrants found dead in the back of a tractor-trailer that reached 170 degrees May 14, 2003. It was about remembering that we are all children of God.

Espinosa learned of the tragedy when he bought "Dying to Cross" by Jorge Ramos in San Antonio in 2009.

A passage in the book that describes the women who perished in the tractor-trailer as singing hymns and praying in their final moments was compelling to say the least. The names of the deceased on a red poster board behind Espinosa made it all real, though, he said.

"Who would think that I would come to Our Lady of Sorrows, that I would be here today?" Espinosa asked.

It's been 12 years since they died and the driver of the tractor-trailer, Tyrone Williams, fled. Although the crowd of mourners dwindles every year, some are as dedicated as ever to preserving the memory of the 19.

Jorge Torres would be 27 today, his mother, Dora Torres, said through a translator.

Her son was traveling from El Salvador to be with his family in Houston. He was studious, friendly and loved playing soccer, she said.

"I'm happy, and thank God people still come," she said.

Besides faded, green crosses marking the site, families and sometimes even strangers lay flowers, candy and countless water bottles down for the deceased.

Martha Olvera, 60, was in federal court in downtown Houston when she heard of the tragedy. She was in federal court because three Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers were on trial for the death of her brother-in-law, Serafin Olvera. They bit him and broke his neck in College Station, but the most time one officer received in prison was nine years for a lesser charge of not giving her brother-in-law medical attention, she said.

Olvera led the first memorial for the 19. Since then, she's been to Washington, D.C., to speak about immigration.

"Our tragedy helped us to help others," she said.

Her latest project is replacing a historical marker stolen from Fleming Prairie Road last year. She and the six others who maintain the site year-round are dipping into their own pockets to do so.

"That hurt the families and especially the immigrant community," Olvera said. "We never ask for money for anything."

Domiciano Aldape was in charge of organizing the service this year. He invited Martin Lopez from the Community Affairs Office of the Consulate of Mexico in Houston.

"This place is sacred," Aldape said.

WASHINGTON POST (Granberg-Michaelson Post): Think Christianity is dying? No, Christianity is shifting dramatically

By Wes Granberg-Michaelson

May 20, 2015

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/05/20/think-christianity-is-dying-no-christianity-is-shifting-dramatically/?postshare=2921432150759084>

While Christianity [may be on the decline](#) in the United States, the world is [becoming more religious](#), not less. While rising numbers of “nones” — those who claim no religious affiliation when asked — claim the attention of religious pundits, the world tells a different story. Religious convictions are growing and shifting geographically in several dramatic ways.

The center of Christianity has shifted from Europe to the global South.

The religious landscape is particularly changing for the world's Christians. A century ago, 80 percent lived in North America and Europe, compared with just 40 percent today.

In 1980, more Christians were found in the global South than the North for the first time in 1,000 years. Today, the Christian community in Latin America and Africa, alone, account for 1 billion people.

Over the past 100 years, Christians grew from less than 10 percent of Africa's population to its nearly 500 million today. One out of four Christians in the world presently is an Africa, and the Pew Research Center estimates that will grow to 40 percent by 2030.

Asia is also experiencing growth as world Christianity's center has moved not only South, but also East. In the last century, Christianity grew at twice the rate of population in that continent. Asia's Christian population of 350 million is projected to grow to 460 million by 2025.

The global religious wildcard is China. Even today, demographers estimate that more Christian believers are found worshipping in China on any given Sunday than in the United States. Future

trends, while difficult to predict because so much is below the religious radar, could dramatically drive down the world's religious "nones."

In Latin America, the massive Christian population is becoming more Pentecostal or Charismatic.

The growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America is estimated to be at three times the rate of Catholic growth. Non-Catholic believers now account for 2 percent of Latin America's 550 million Christians.

Today, Brazil not only has more Catholics than any other country, but also more Pentecostals, reflecting Pentecostalism's astonishing global growth. Tracing its roots to the Azusa Street revival in 1910, and comprising 5 percent of Christians in 1970, today one of four Christians is Pentecostal or Charismatic. Or think of it this way: one out of 12 people alive today has a Pentecostal form of Christian faith.

Global migration matters.

Such global trends are being experienced locally through migration. About 214 million people have moved from one country to another as migrants and refugees, or are in that process. Those capturing today's headlines are Africans clinging to precarious vessels trying to cross the Mediterranean, or the hundreds of thousands uprooted in Syria and the Middle East. But the striking religious factor is that overall, about 105 million who have migrated are Christians — a significantly higher percentage than their 33 percent of the world's population. Sociologists report that the process of migration typically increases the intensity of religious faith — whatever its form — of those persons crossing borders of nations and cultures. Fresh spiritual vitality in both North America and Europe is being fueled by the process of global migration.

Immigration shapes the U.S. religious landscape.

In the United States, about 43 million residents were born in another country, and immigrated here. Of these, about 74 percent adhere to the Christian faith, while 5 percent are Muslim, 4 percent Buddhist and 3 percent Hindu. Of those presently migrating into this country, that proportion remains high — about 60 percent. The religious impact of immigration on U.S. society is typically overlooked in the debates over immigration reform, and the presence of about 11 million immigrants without acceptable legal documentation.

Yet, the reality is that patterns of immigration since the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration and Naturalization Act, and continuing to this day, are having a decisive impact on the Christian community in the United States. A vast majority of Hispanics in the United States are Catholic, and immigrants are sustaining the demographic presence of U.S. Catholicism, accounting for 70 percent of Catholic growth since 1960. They also provide fresh spiritual enthusiasm.

Demographers estimate that 54 percent of Hispanic Catholics practice charismatic forms of worship found in Pentecostal churches. Among Catholic millennials, over half are now Hispanic.

There are three times more Protestant Hispanics in the United States than Episcopalians.

Immigration has transformed Protestantism in America. Some of President Obama's strongest advocates for immigration reform are found in more evangelical and Pentecostal leaning Hispanic groups, as well as the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops.

Asian and African immigrants who bring their faith with them across oceans likewise are also reshaping America's religious landscape, and especially the Christian community. The Philippines follows Mexico as the country sending most immigrants to the United States, and those are overwhelmingly Catholic. The influence of Korean Christians is felt throughout both mainline and evangelical Protestantism. Fuller Seminary, in Pasadena, Calif., a center of moderate evangelical scholarship and training, counts about 1,000 Asian and Asian Americans among its 5,000 students.

While African immigration is less numerical, its growth has been exponential, from 35,355 African immigrants in 1960 to 1.5 million 50 years later. Many carry their devotion to forms of

Christian faith that are transforming sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, started not by missionaries but as an indigenous church in Nigeria, has grown to 5 million members in 147 countries, including 720 congregations in the United States. North of Dallas, it has built a worship pavilion holding 10,000 at the cost of \$15.5 million.

While Chicago has 590,000 foreign-born residents in its city limits, 984,000 are found in its suburbs, with a majority forming places of Christian worship or joining multicultural congregations, if they find welcome. At the Vineyard church in Columbus, Ohio, 28 percent of its 9,000 members come from 147 countries other than the United States.

The United States cannot ignore the impact of immigration on religious patterns.

The growth of religious practice in the world is being experienced through patterns of immigration to the United States, patterns that should become a central feature of the debate over immigration reform.

I am mystified, for example, by political conservatives who cry for the resurgence of religious values in this country, and then support the deportation of those actually growing the nation's religious vitality. And I am disappointed with political liberals, who, like I, support comprehensive immigration reform, but can seem deaf and dumb to the religious life of immigrants themselves, who often combine their unapologetic faith with commitments to social solidarity, welfare and reform of the broken immigration system.

The history of immigration to this country has been a story of unintended consequences which have tested our commitment to religious and cultural pluralism. The religious impact of immigration, largely unnoticed in hotly contested rhetoric around political reform, offers the potential, once again, to enrich our society in ways we have not yet imagined.

Wes Granberg-Michaelson, whose most recent book is ["From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church,"](#) served for 17 years as general secretary of the Reformed Church in America.

WALL STREET JOURNAL (Moore Op-Ed): Evangelical Hispanics and the 2016 Vote

GOP candidates talking about immigration need to take into account this growing demographic.

By Russell Moore

May 7, 2015

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/evangelical-hispanics-and-the-2016-vote-1431040230>

In 1976, journalists writing about presidential candidate Jimmy Carter's religious faith often felt obliged to define the meaning of the phrase "born again." The fact that the concept was quite familiar to millions of Americans didn't matter; it seemed exotic to some in government and media. In 2016, evangelical Christians may have to explain "born again" makes perfectly good sense, whether in English or in Spanish.

Last week in Houston, several thousand Hispanic evangelicals gathered to worship and to discuss matters such as the sanctity of life, racial justice, economic growth and the values of hard work. A few weeks ago, a thousand or so Latino evangelicals in the broadly Calvinist tradition met in Orlando to speak about theology, evangelism and church-planting. The conferences reflect an underappreciated demographic fact: Born-again Protestant Hispanic congregations are growing quickly. One recent study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that 16% of the nation's Hispanics identify as evangelicals—and that number is steadily on the rise.

Presidential candidates, especially Republican presidential hopefuls, should take notice. The immigration skirmishes over the past several years have turned the topic into a culture-war issue it should never have become. The Republican House is so afraid to touch immigration policy that it has taken no action at all, not even to provide an alternative to the Senate's reform attempt or to the president's reckless unilateral action.

Republican presidential candidates may face the temptation that several faced in past primary cycles, of proving their conservative bona fides by taking the shrillest possible view of immigrants. After all, some might reason, past presidential aspirants [Rick Perry](#), [Mike Huckabee](#) and [Newt Gingrich](#) were savaged by opponents simply for suggesting that we ought to have a heart regarding children brought to this country by their parents. Some will remember this and think that harsh talk about immigrants is necessary.

To do so would be a mistake, both morally and strategically. And an immigrant-bashing candidate may find that he is alienating not only people in the boardrooms but also people in the pews.

Evangelicals may be divided about the best way to fix the immigration system, but they are not divided about immigrants. After all, evangelicals are those who, along with Roman Catholics, have led the national pro-life movement, arguing that a person's worth is not wrapped up in how "useful" he or she is deemed to be. One's worth is intrinsic as part of the humanity for which Christ died.

Moreover, evangelicals and other pro-life Americans have rightly said that people should never be regarded as a burden on society. America isn't a silo of limited resources that will be spoiled by adding more people. Evangelicals see, with [Pope Francis](#), the birth of children as a sign of a civilization's vitality—and evangelicals see, with Ronald Reagan, the influx of legal, law-abiding immigrants as a sign of a country's future blessing.

The most evangelistic, growing congregations in this country are filled with first- and second-generation immigrants. There is more salsa at our church potlucks lately, and we like it. Baptisms at the most vibrant congregations are often performed in multiple languages. Sunday-school literature comes in both English and Spanish, and often in several other languages.

Not everyone will agree on how to reform immigration. But evangelicals recognize that slogans like "self-deportation" won't fix a system that is already harming the economy by penalizing those who are working to support their families. If a candidate opposes certain immigration reforms, propose an alternative. No one, so far, is proposing to deport the estimated 11 million people here illegally, and that is a good thing, because such would require "big government" in the worst way—the kind that splits up families.

Those who support reform must also understand that this support cannot be articulated exclusively in economic terms. Yes, immigration is good for the economy, but a candidate who doesn't communicate in human, moral terms is hardly ready for the bully pulpit.

But most important is that candidates don't demonize immigrant communities. Yes, let's deport the dangerous and secure the border. Let's debate how to deal with those already here. But let's avoid slogans that use immigrants as a foil to win votes. From the immigrant communities in this country, we might just have, playing in a crib somewhere, the next Billy Graham.

Evangelicals have started to see this. An immigrant brother in the next pew is a person to be respected, a creation of God, not a piñata for politicians. "Born again" comes in Spanish as well as English versions—and so do voters.

Mr. Moore is the president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

WHO NEWS RADIO 1040: Immigration--Race

May 4, 2015

[http://www.whoradio.com/onair/mickelson-in-the-morning-7738/immigrationrace-13560314/Rev. Vernon Naffier, Alex Nowrasteh and Matt Soerens](http://www.whoradio.com/onair/mickelson-in-the-morning-7738/immigrationrace-13560314/Rev.VernonNaffier,AlexNowrastehandMattSoerens) with a more open view on amnesty.

WND.COM: Hispanic evangelicals argue biblical case for amnesty

By [Jerome R. Corsi](#)

May 2, 2015

<http://www.wnd.com/2015/05/hispanic-evangelicals-argue-biblical-case-for-amnesty/>

HOUSTON – Several different Hispanic evangelicals leaders speaking at the [National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference](#) in Houston this week argued a biblical basis for the Obama administration’s push to grant legal status to millions of illegal immigrants currently in the United States.

While the NHCLC is a conservative Christian organization that generally sides with Republican conservatives on moral issues, including opposition to same-sex marriage and a strong pro-life position that opposes abortion, the group’s membership also generally cites 11 million as the number of illegal immigrants currently in the United States, arguing their Christian faith, willingness to work and devotion to family values further justify the determination of the evangelical organization to make sure U.S. immigration policy takes particular care not to divide illegal immigrant families by deportation.

“We have been disappointed by both Republicans and Democrats,” Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the NHCLC, explained to reporters. “It’s about our Christian faith. It’s about Matthew 25 and Leviticus 19. It’s about finding a way where we can reconcile Romans 13, ‘respecting the rule of law.’ We are not supporting amnesty as an organization. We’re not in favor of open borders. We believe the United States is a sovereign nation that has the right and responsibility to secure our borders. We are concerned that there are millions of people in this nation where we look the other way, and we believe it is hypocritical to separate families, to deport a mom or a dad and leave the children behind. We need to find a way to integrate as expeditiously as possible those who have been here that are not dependent on government subsidies, but are depending on the good things God has placed in each one of their lives, that are adhering to the law with the exception of entering the country illegally.”

Arguing for a legislative solution, Rodriguez called upon the Republican majority in Congress to work with President Obama in passing comprehensive immigration reform.

“Republicans must cross the proverbial Jordan of immigration reform in order to step into the promised land of the Hispanic electorate,” he said. “Almost half of all Hispanics voted for George W. Bush in 2004. This is not the African American vote that is locked in 90 percent Democrat. This is the quintessential, independent electorate of the first half of the 21st century. The Latino electorate is up for grabs.”

Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy research and director of the Research Institute for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, shared Rodriguez’s view.

“Southern Baptists share the concern for immigrants already among us,” he said. “Southern Baptists first ask if we can get some clear guidance from Scripture on the immigration question. This was important as well for me. I initially related to immigration reform like a lot of the people who are opposed to immigration reform, believing illegal immigrants have come to the United States violating U.S. laws, are staying here either by overstaying their visas or on fraudulent documents. My gut for a pure sense of justice was that all illegal immigrants should be deported.”

Duke explained his views changed after consulting the Bible.

“Leviticus 19:34 says, ‘But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself ...’” Duke said, citing the Old Testament.

“In Matthew 25:35, in the New Testament, Jesus says, ‘I was a stranger, and ye took me in.’ Whether you look at the Old Testament or the New Testament, you get the same message. I had to let God work in my life as I thought about this particular question. As God worked in my life, it became apparent to me that God wanted me to work in a way that was compassionate and understanding and loving toward these 11 million undocumented people who, other than the fact that they came here or are here illegally, are law-abiding, family-oriented people.

“These are people who are contributing to society, supporting themselves and raising families. You can’t possibly be Christian to send them back to hostile environments where many do not even speak the language if they were born here. There may be no jobs for them back there. I

don't see how we can call ourselves Christian if we don't deal with these people in a compassionate way, securing the borders, but allowing the 11 million undocumented already here to remain here legally by putting them on a path to legal status that ends up in citizenship." Also speaking at the NHCLC conference was León Rodríguez, director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, USCIS, who agreed that Christian compassion required finding a solution to provide legal status to the 11 million illegal immigrants currently in the United States.

"My parents and grandparents came from Cuba where they were fleeing Fidel Castro's dictatorship," Rodríguez explained in a press conference prior to his speech.

The Obama administration's plan to have the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services implement the memorandum signed by Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson on Nov. 20, 2014, designed to implement Obama's executive actions, has been temporarily blocked by a federal judge in Texas.

WHEATON COLLEGE MEDIA CENTER: Perspectives On Immigration

What's to be done about the more than 11 million illegal immigrants living in the United States today, and how does our Christian faith inform our understanding of the debate? We offer responses to four challenging questions surrounding immigration from Wheaton alumni and faculty with backgrounds in political science, missions, law, and psychology.

<http://wheaton.edu/Media-Center/Wheaton-Magazine/Spring-2015/Feature-Articles/Wheaton-College-Perspectives-on-Immigration>

Q: How does the Christian faith help to structure the moral analysis of immigration policy, and what are some principles that should guide immigration reform?

by *Dr. Mark Amstutz, professor of political science*

Because freedom is a basic human right, people are entitled to migrate to foreign lands. From an international legal perspective, the right to migrate, however, does not entail a right to immigrate. People can leave their homeland, but whether a person can enter a foreign country is determined by the receiving state. Since states are responsible for the affairs within their territorial boundaries, an important government duty is the protection of borders.

U.S. immigration policy is a complex set of rules governing the process by which foreigners are permitted to work in or visit America temporarily (nonimmigrants) and those permitted to live permanently in the country (immigrants). Every year, the U.S. government allows more than a million aliens to become legal permanent residents (LPRs). In addition, about 100,000 persons are admitted as refugees or asylees annually. Many observers argue that the U.S. system, however, is broken. Some of the system's major shortcomings include: weak border control, inadequate law enforcement, insufficient visas for workers, long delays for family reunification, deportation that ruptures family ties, and the presence of millions of unauthorized aliens.

Because of these and other related shortcomings, many people believe that current immigration policies need to be radically changed. To a significant degree, the call for comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) has been fueled by a desire to legalize the more than 11 million unauthorized aliens who have either entered the country illegally or have overstayed their visa. How can Christians contribute to a more humane and effective immigration system? Although the Bible is not a manual on national or global politics, it nonetheless provides principles that can help structure the moral analysis of this complex issue. In my book [*Evangelicals and American Foreign Policy*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2013), I set forth a biblical framework relevant to global politics. The framework includes several principles, including: 1) the moral legitimacy of states, 2) God's sovereignty over nations, 3) the priority of persons, and 4) the need for justice. In addressing the challenge posed by the large number of migrants wishing to migrate from low-income states to more developed countries, a Christian perspective should emphasize such norms as human dignity, compassion for those suffering oppression (especially

refugees), justice toward all aliens, and the rule of law. Since these norms are not always complementary, the development of a just immigration system will inevitably involve trade-offs among competing moral values.

In addressing immigration reform, the church should serve as a moral teacher, not a political interest group. Excessive political advocacy could undermine the spiritual authority of the church. According to Protestant ethicist Paul Ramsey, the church should alert government officials when policies are inconsistent with Biblical revelation, but it should not support specific political actions. Similarly, Evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry declared that the institutional church should refrain from policy advocacy since it had no mandate or competence in governmental affairs. Thus, as believers become involved in the immigration debate, they should recall C. S. Lewis' admonition that the church makes its most lasting contribution to this world by focusing on eternal verities, not temporal necessities.

Dr. Mark Amstutz initiated and developed the [political science department](#) at Wheaton College, serving as its first chair for two decades. He has also directed eight overseas programs and is the author of several books. He is currently carrying out research on U.S. immigration.

Q: What are the biggest issues facing the Church regarding immigration, and how should the Church respond?

by Matthew Soerens '06, U.S. church training specialist for [World Relief](#) and the field director for the [Evangelical Immigration Table](#)

Immigration impacts the church in phenomenal ways, presenting unprecedented missional opportunities. Among the millions who have migrated to the United States in recent years are both many strong believers—who are revitalizing struggling congregations and denominations—and many others who do not yet know the hope of a relationship with Jesus, but who may hear and understand the gospel for the first time in their new country. Missiologist Timothy Tennent argues that “immigration actually presents the greatest hope for Christian renewal in North America.”

However, not all American Christians recognize this missional opportunity. In fact, a 2013 Pew Research Center survey found that a slight majority of white evangelical Christians believe that immigrants present a threat to their customs and values. Perhaps because of these polarized views, a little less than half of evangelical congregations are intentionally seeking to serve and reach immigrants in their communities, according to LifeWay Research. One effect is that 60 percent of those of non-Christian religious traditions living in the U.S. (excluding atheists and agnostics) say that they do not know any Christians, based on research from Gordon-Conwell's Center for the Study of Global Christianity. We are likely to miss this divinely-orchestrated opportunity to “make disciples of all nations” within our communities if we are fixated on a misperceived threat.

Such fears are driven not by Scripture—which includes frequent and specific injunctions to love, welcome, and seek justice for immigrants, who are repeatedly referenced along with orphans and widows as uniquely vulnerable—but by media narratives biased toward one partisan perspective or the other. By their own admission, only 12 percent of white evangelicals think about immigration primarily from the perspective of their faith, according to a Pew Research Center study. That's likely because only 16 percent say they have ever heard immigration discussed by their pastor. There has been a discipleship deficit on this issue. If we are to reap the Kingdom harvest presented by immigration, local churches will need to engage the issue directly, challenging Christ-followers to subject their attitudes toward immigrants to the teachings of Scripture.

Finally, the church can and should engage questions of immigration policy—but with biblical principles guiding our approach, rather than allowing political ideology to dictate how we read Scripture. A broad range of Christian leaders have affirmed the Evangelical Immigration Table's Statement of Principles for Immigration Reform, which urges Congress to reform our country's

immigration laws in ways that balance recognition of the dignity of each person and commitment to intact families with respect for the rule of law and national security. Such advocacy gives hope to many of the immigrants who make up a growing share of the church, many of whom are caught within a dysfunctional immigration system, and also challenges the American church as a whole to re-examine the topic through a biblical lens. When we do so, we will recognize that our God is working in incredible ways to advance his Kingdom through immigration, and find ourselves invited to join him.

Matthew Soerens '06 is the co-author of [Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate](#) (InterVarsity Press, 2009).

Q: How can a clear understanding of the psychology of immigration help Christians better engage the conversation on immigration reform from a biblical/theological perspective?

by Dr. Karen Hurula, M.A. '09, Psy.D. '12, licensed clinical psychologist at [Central DuPage Pastoral Counseling Center](#) in Carol Stream, Ill.

Like most Americans, I have an immigrant story. When my mother's mother and her family came to America, my great-grandfather declared, "We are American now, no more Dutch can be spoken in this house." It has always made me sad that we lost any significant Dutch heritage. Immigrants have historically felt pressure to abandon their culture of origin, but research shows this has a negative psychological effect on individuals and families as they navigate the acculturation process.

Throughout our nation's history, many immigrants have come to the United States fleeing persecution or seeking economic opportunity. Once here, separated from family and social support systems, lacking language and basic necessities of life, and often facing a higher cost of living, they sometimes find themselves disillusioned and isolated. This phenomenon, identified as the "Immigrant Paradox" by B. Fuller and C. Garcia Coll in their 2010 article in *Developmental Psychology*, has been evident in my own practice. After paying a high price, literally and figuratively, for a chance at a new life, many immigrants wind up unhappy, and face greater medical and mental health problems than they did prior to migration. Over time and with appropriate supports, however, this difficult time can resolve into a well-adjusted new cultural identity.

In recent history, as the number of illegal immigrants has swelled, so has our culture's palpable resentment of immigrants. Talking with friends and those I encounter professionally, I've seen the desperation and hopelessness that result from current immigration policies. Individuals who do cross the border illegally face very real life-and-death fears as they travel. Once here, they do not dare return home to visit family. Due to their illegal status, they live in constant fear of immigration officials, police, and other authorities.

In his 2006 book *Acculturation Psychology*, researcher John W. Berry lays out how these realities compound the negative experiences immigrants have, adding to their acculturation stress. It is imperative to appreciate that most immigrants choose these risks and stressors over the alternative of remaining in countries where their basic rights might not be guaranteed or protected, or where their ability to work has vanished.

Can we find guidance in psychological research and scripture for how to respond? Research shows that immigrants experience the most positive outcomes when they are supported in maintaining a balance between identification with their culture of origin and adoption of their new culture. We might need to open our hearts and move outside our cultural comfort-zones to welcome new immigrants into our communities, becoming their adoptive families and social support systems. Faith communities are an obvious place to facilitate this welcoming.

In the Old Testament, outsiders were not given standing as members of the nation of Israel without conforming to God's strict requirements, but, more broadly, the Israelites were not to enslave or mistreat foreigners as they had been mistreated in Egypt. Even under the old covenant, God's people were instructed to show foreigners basic dignity and respect, to allow

them to work, and not to shame them for their status. Whatever the political issues at stake, morally, Christians should remember God's law and Jesus' example to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Dr. Karen Hurula M.A. '09, Psy.D. '12 is the daughter of Salvation Army missionaries to Latin America. She is Spanish-speaking and enjoys serving the Hispanic community in her work as a therapist.

Q: How have your Christian faith and your background as a prosecutor informed your perspective on the legal challenges of U.S. immigration policy and the best ways to address these challenges?

by [David Iglesias](#) '80, director of the [J. Dennis Hastert Center for Economics, Government, and Public Policy](#) and the Jean and E. Floyd Kvamme Associate Professor of Politics and Law

I have always viewed immigration with a lot of cognitive dissonance. On the one hand, I am the son of a legal immigrant from Panama who came to America through Ellis Island in 1936. I've spoken at many federal court naturalization ceremonies. In my remarks, I've thanked new American citizens for obeying the rule of law. Because of my father's journey to become a naturalized American citizen, I am sympathetic to the immigrant.

On the other hand, as the United States Attorney for the District of New Mexico, I was responsible for enforcing federal law, which included more than 11,000 prosecutions between 2001-2007. According to U.S. Justice Department statistics, approximately 65 percent of these prosecutions were immigration offenses, most of them for illegal entry without inspection. In other words, I was responsible for thousands of prosecutions involving illegal immigration into the United States. The vast majority of these defendants served jail time and were sent back to their countries of origin. While I understood why these immigrants wanted to come to America, they had all been caught multiple times trying to immigrate illegally, had been deported by the Department of Homeland Security, and then tried to immigrate illegally again.

To be sure, America is an immigration nation. Nonetheless, every nation has the legal right and obligation to set standards for entry and citizenship. The problem with the United States' immigration scheme is that we are victims of our own success. This country is a magnet for those the poet Emma Lazarus called the "tired . . . poor . . . huddled masses yearning to breathe free." The United States attracts millions who want to experience the American dream of peace, prosperity, and upward mobility.

What obligation do American Christians have regarding immigration? First, we should remember that all of our ancestors immigrated from somewhere else. America has struggled with immigration for centuries, going back to the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1782 that unfairly targeted immigrants for arrest, indefinite detention, and deportation. Second, both Democrats and Republicans should agree that our immigration system is profoundly broken and needs not just repair, but replacement.

As a Christian I'm keenly aware of Romans 13:1, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities . . ." For national security and economic reasons we need to control immigration and encourage immigration for those who can best contribute to this country.

I support giving guest worker status to illegal immigrants who self-report their status, provided they have not committed serious crimes, are gainfully employed, and are willing to pay a fine. They would not be subject to deportation if they stay employed, pay taxes and social security, and do not violate criminal laws. This plan would not lead to citizenship. According to The Cato Institute economist Alex Nowrasteh, immigrants contribute more to America than they take. It is not feasible to deport the more than 11 million estimated illegal immigrants. Given the Scriptural mandate to care for the immigrant, we must craft a new immigration system that upholds the best of American traditions, is fair to the immigrant, and is consonant with God's Word.

[David Iglesias](#) '80 has had a diverse and global 30-year legal career, and has served in a number of roles including United States Attorney, U.S. Navy JAG Officer, and White House

Fellow. He defended a marine in a case that partially inspired “[A Few Good Men](#),” and authored the book, [In Justice: Inside the Scandal That Rocked the Bush Administration](#) (Wiley, 2008).

WMBI, MOODY RADIO CHICAGO: Karl & June Show

May 15, 2015

Matt Soerens joined to discuss the LifeWay Research polling results.

WORLD MAGAZINE: Bishops: Immigrant detention system needs ‘major reform’

By J.C. Derrick

May 14, 2015

http://www.worldmag.com/2015/05/catholic_bishops_immigrant_detention_system_needs_major_reform

The U.S. immigrant detention system treats detainees as criminals and needs “extensive reform,” according to a new joint report from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Center for Migration Studies.

“It is time for our nation to reform this inhumane system, which unnecessarily detains persons, especially vulnerable populations, who are no threat to us and who should be afforded due process and legal protections,” said Seattle Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration.

WORLD documented some of the challenges with the immigrant detention system in [reports](#) last year. The federal government spends about \$2 billion each year detaining around 400,000 immigrants, but the system is often lost amid the larger conversation about immigration reform. Although many detainees are being lawfully deported, some of them entered the country legally, and others are refugees.

The USCCB report criticized the detention system’s presumption of guilt, resulting in [long-term detention](#) for asylum seekers, human trafficking victims, [survivors of torture](#), and mothers with children. The report assailed the federal government’s policy of detaining an average of 34,000 immigrants each day—a congressionally mandated quota that has drawn widespread criticism, especially since privately owned prisons directly benefit.

“Detention is treated as a pillar of the U.S. immigration enforcement system akin to border control or removal, but in fact it is a means to an end,” [the report](#) said. “The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) lacks the authority to imprison criminals and does not hold anybody awaiting trial or serving a criminal sentence.”

The report called for the federal government to use more detention alternatives to ensure immigrants appear for their court dates. Pilot programs using tools such as supervised release and electronic monitoring have proven [largely successful](#), but Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) often does not use them.

Although alternatives could save taxpayers millions, Congress has shown little interest in reforming a system that costs about \$150 per day, per detainee. Activists argue the savings would free up resources to hire more immigration judges, since the immigration court system [is overloaded](#), causing lengthy case delays.

While the fiscal benefits could be significant, Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, told me the most compelling reason to reform the detention system is out of respect for human dignity. He said controlling the border is critically important, but policies should focus on keeping families together.

“The system, as it is, is in dire need of reform,” he said. “Children shouldn’t be treated the way we treat criminal offenders.”