

Driver's Licenses for All Immigrants

QUOTES FROM RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERS

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Driving is, for many in the U.S., a basic means of survival. How can it be ethical for us to use immigrants to pave our roads yet deny them the right to drive? How can it be good public policy to ensure that a whole segment of drivers lack secure identification, registration, and car insurance? Driver's licenses should be available to all capable drivers, regardless of immigration status.

Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee
Email Correspondence, Nov. 4, 2004

When we deny a driver's license to immigrants, we do not make our roads or our society any safer. On the contrary, because they must drive to survive, we simply force them to drive without insurance and without making sure they really understand the laws and customs of driving in our country.

The Rev. Dr. Mark R. Sills
Executive Director, FaithAction International House
Email Correspondence, Oct. 13, 2004

If you try to use the hospitals, police departments, or driver's license bureaus to enforce immigration law, it does not mean you will apprehend a lot of undocumented immigrants. It means sick people will stay away from hospitals, victims of crime will not report them, and drivers will drive without being tested and registered. In other words, these tactics drive undocumented people further into the shadows and undermine community health and safety.

Ralston H. Deffenbaugh, Jr.
President, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Email Correspondence, Oct. 14, 2004

Our current license laws punish and exclude some of the most vulnerable and hardworking people in our communities, yet they do not achieve their stated purpose of making our communities more secure or law-abiding.

Nancy Powers
Farmworker Affairs, Florida Catholic Conference
Email Correspondence, July 20, 2004

The establishment of restrictions to a driver's license for immigrants would place barriers in the way of a productive work life and limit access to facilities that provide educational opportunities and medical services We do not need Congress going beyond the suggestions of the 9/11 Commission with this proposal [i.e., HR 10 and S 2845].

Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory
Washington Office Director, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Email Correspondence, Oct. 20, 2004

Before the law changed in Nebraska and started requiring a Social Security number to obtain a driver's license, we preached to our congregation that they must obey the laws of the land and specifically mentioned obtaining driver's licenses and car insurance. Now people who are already here and have difficulty correcting their immigration status have no opportunity to be legal in these other areas.

Pastor Mary Anaya
Director, Mission for All Nations
Email Correspondence, Sept. 29, 2004

. . . we are strongly opposed to your [California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's] suggestion that a marker or identifier be placed on driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. It is inappropriate at best and deeply upsetting at worst. It will be used by some persons to treat the undocumented with scorn and ethnic discrimination.

Rabbis Don Goor, Karen Bender, Dan Moskowitz,
Steven B. Jacobs, John Rosove, and Jim Kaufman of Los Angeles, CA
Letter to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, June 24, 2004

Our work with refugees and immigrants demonstrates repeatedly that being able to drive is critical to securing a job. If we want immigrants to be productive, let them drive legally by granting them a license.

C. Richard Parkins
Director, Episcopal Migration Ministries
Email Correspondence, Oct. 13, 2004

Like in the last broad legalization under Ronald Reagan in 1986, the federal government will announce its confidence in a short but solid list of other documents that will be accepted for identification, including passports and birth certificates. If such documents are good and secure enough for the federal government and legalization, surely such alternative identification is good and secure enough for driver's licenses in New York!

John K. Bingham, Esq.
Immigration Committee Chair, New York State Council of Catholic Charities Directors
Testimony before the New York State Assembly Standing Committee on Transportation, Aug. 19, 2004

We support all measures that make our residents more uniformly part of our society with the responsibilities as well as privileges that go with living here. Assuring that people who drive are qualified to do so will help diminish accidents and ensure higher standards of responsible behavior by those with motor vehicles.

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of Public Policy, California Council of Churches/California Church IMPACT
Letter to the California State Assembly, Sept. 2, 2003

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