



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

June 9, 2009

Dear Representative:

The Episcopal Church is committed to promoting family unity as a central piece of our immigration system. We applaud Rep. Michael Honda (D-CA) for introducing the Reuniting Families Act, H.R. 2709, along with 55 original co-sponsors. This legislation would provide a solution to the long backlogs and restrictions that our immigration system puts on families and protect them from unnecessary and hard separation. We urge you to join as a co-sponsor to this important piece of legislation.

We recognize families as the fundamental unit in our society through which individuals are able to grow and experience the love of God. Family unity has been a central piece of our immigration system and a foundation of our communities. Tragically, for families seeking reunification through our immigration procedures, the process is complicated, time consuming and burdensome and thus can systematically separate and destroy families. Children, parents and siblings are facing increasingly lengthy backlogs and painful years of separation. The current backlog of visas not only hurts the entire country but it punishes law abiding residents and citizens who simply seek to bring their spouses, children, parents and siblings together.

The Reuniting Families Act would help to reduce the time that some family members must wait before being able to join their loved ones. The bill would also give the government authority to ameliorate hardships faced by families who might otherwise be forced apart by current immigration laws. H.R. 2709 will, among other things, reclassify the children and spouses of lawful permanent residents as "immediate relatives," recapture unused family- and employment-based visas lost to the bureaucratic system, and increase the per-country limits on family and employment visas. The bill provides equal treatment under the law, ending a long-standing denial of civil rights, by allowing legal U.S. residents to petition for their foreign-born permanent partner in the same way—and with the same rigorous process of documentation—as opposite-sex couples.

The Reuniting Families Act would alleviate pressure on U.S. borders, allow more immigrants to utilize legal immigration channels, and continue to foster the development of vibrant American communities. For all these reasons, we urge you to co-sponsor H.R. 2709.

Sincerely,

Maureen Shea
Director

Ana White
Immigration and Refugee Analyst

ADVOCACY CENTER

110 Maryland Avenue, NE Suite 309 Washington DC 20002 USA
202.547.7300 ♦ 800.228.0515 ♦ Fax: 202.547.4457 ♦ www.episcopalchurch.org/eppn