



General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church

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Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the General Board of Church & Society of The United Methodist Church, we applaud Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) and the 55 original co-sponsors for introducing H.R. 2709, the Reuniting Families Act. Strong, united families promote sound communities. I urge you to co-sponsor the Reuniting Families Act, H.R. 2709.

The United Methodist Church believes the family to be the most basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect, and fidelity. We affirm the importance of loving parents for all children. We also understand the family as encompassing a wider range of options than that of the two-generational unit of parents and children.

Current immigration laws depreciate the importance of the family unit by forcing U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to choose between being separated from their loved ones for upwards of seven years to remain in the United States, or to leave behind the communities they love and support to be with their family members abroad. This abhorrent practice not only affects individual families, but it negatively impacts communities that rely on the contributions of individuals and families for their strength and diversity.

H.R. 2709 would alleviate the excessive backlogs that families face under the current immigration system. It would recapture unused family-sponsored visas lost to bureaucratic delays from fiscal years 1992-2007. It provides that unused family-sponsored visas in the future will rollover into the next fiscal year, allowing for more loved ones to be reunited with U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. The bill will expand the classification of "immediate relatives" to include the children and spouses of lawful permanent residents. Currently, only U.S. citizens are qualified to petition for immediate relatives to receive a visa.

This bill increases the per country limits of family and employment-based visas from 7% to 10%. The increase will help reduce the unnecessarily long wait times for individuals trying to migrate to the United States and reunite with families from their countries of origin. Further, H.R. 2709 will enable the reunification of families by permitting orphans, widows and widowers to migrate to the U.S. even if the individual who petitioned for them has passed away.

The United Methodist Church advocates for comprehensive immigration reform that will affirm the worth, dignity, inherent value and rights of all migrants, as well as clear the backlogs to enable the reunification of families separated by migration or detainment.

I urge you to support and co-sponsor the Reuniting Families Act, H.R. 2709, so that we can achieve family unity for all.

Sincerely,

Jim Winkler
General Secretary