

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Bishops
FROM: Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes, Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration
RE: Religious Worker Visa Program Regulation
DATE: August 4, 2007

I write to inform you of a proposed regulation which would make procedural and substantive changes to the Religious Worker Visa Program (RWVP), upon which many dioceses rely to bring in foreign priests, religious, and lay personnel to assist the pastoral mission of the church in the United States. The proposed regulation could seriously undermine the ability of dioceses to sponsor these religious workers in the future.

The proposed regulation was published April 25 in the Federal Register. On June 25, 2007, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) submitted comments to the proposed rule. Attached are a summary of the rule and a copy of the comments submitted to it by USCCB/CLINIC.

It is expected that the office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will promulgate a final rule on the program by the end of the year.

It is important that the Administration hear from us regarding the potential impact the proposed rule would have on the pastoral mission of the church. I ask you to consider sending a letter to President Bush asking for significant changes in the proposed rule. Also included in this packet is a sample letter to President Bush on this issue.

Should you send a letter, I ask that you provide a copy to Migration and Refugee Services at fax number 202-722-8755, to the attention of Kevin Appleby, Director of Migration and Refugee Policy. Should you have any questions, you may contact Carlos Ortiz Miranda in the Office of General Counsel at 202-541-3300 or Kevin at 202-541-3260.

Thank you for your consideration and your ongoing support.