

## **Catholic social policy analysts offer insights on state of immigration reform**

**WHEATON**—While it looks like passage of the proposed Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill is dead in the water, at least for the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, officials from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) are far from defeated. Follow “**Immigration**” for updates.

### **Immigration**

In a July 3 telephone conference call with diocesan and archdiocesan representatives, peace and justice organizations, including the Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation organization, USCCB issues representatives in Washington expressed disappointment over the failure of Congress to move forward with an immigration program that coincides with Catholic social teachings. Specifically speaking, Mary Ann Doughton, USCCB government liaison, said “transition” of the bill between House representatives who are favorable to immigration reform but who are concerned over cynicism on the part of voters in their regions.

Doughton said, “We’re facing a difficult fight in the House. ...In order to get a decent bill, we have to change the conversation,” which means educating the public on Catholic social teaching in regard to immigration.

Pursuing the stream of thought, Notre Dame Sister Jane Burke, director of the USCCB National Campaign for Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope Campaign, and Chris West, USCCB grassroots advocacy coordinator, agreed that pro-immigration reform advocates in the Congress are generally more motivated to stand up for a just cause if they receive support from a significant number of voters. It diminishes the risk congressmen take when supporting sensitive and contentious issues.

During this session, Congress is expected to take a “band aide” approach to the issue of immigration, debating portions of proposed amendments within the total package. Particularly, Doughton said questions about legal re-entry requirements for agricultural workers crossing the border along with other provisions in the DREAM Act, which was sponsored by McCain-Kennedy last year, are expected to generate discussions and debate about conditional residency.

While the federal government seems stymied when it comes to immigration reform, Sister Burke said movement on the issue at the local and state level could be a catalyst for change. Already some municipalities have passed ordinances that limit restrictions on immigrants. “The next wave will have to come from the state,” she added.

Offering an overall perspective on the issue, West said he expects the immigration battle would be a long one. Reflecting on the in the 1960s, West stressed, “We have to change the conversation.” It’s anticipated that the battle will eventually end with reform, but it requires a change of heart and attitude. The crux of the matter is forged with the ethical and moral tenacity of Catholic social teachings.

In light of a significant anti-immigration attitude in Washington, Sister Burke said, “We have to pray” about shifting opinions toward immigrants and immigration policies in the United States.

For more information visit: [http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/contact\\_us.html](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/contact_us.html).