



# Arizona Catholic Conference

Diocese of Gallup • Diocese of Phoenix • Diocese of Tucson

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## **ARIZONA BISHOPS EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT LEGISLATION TARGETING UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS**

PHOENIX (March 8, 2010) The Bishops of the Catholic Conference of Arizona, in a statement released today, expressed concern to Arizona government officials about legislation (SB 1070 and HB 2632) that the bishops fear will deter undocumented persons who become victims of crime from reporting to civil authorities out of fear of deportation.

The Most Rev. Thomas J. Olmsted, Bishop of Phoenix; the Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas, Bishop of Tucson; and the Most Rev. James S. Wall, Bishop of Gallup, NM, say in the statement that it is in the best interest of the people in the state that all people, regardless of their citizenship status, should not be afraid to report crimes.

“Anything that may deter crimes from being reported or prosecuted will only keep dangerous criminals on the streets, making our communities less safe,” the bishops said in their statement.

Another thing troubling the Arizona bishops is that if the legislation becomes law, Arizona would become the first state in the nation to codify its own “illegal immigration” law by requiring persons who are here unlawfully to be charged with trespassing under Arizona law. While supporters of the legislation say that the trespassing law is designed to hold undocumented immigrants who are suspected of crimes, the bishops fear it would result in far reaching and unintended consequences as the legislation does not limit enforcement to persons suspected of criminal activity, opening the door to criminalizing the presence of even children and young people brought into our country by their parents.

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## **ARIZONA BISHOPS CONCERNED ABOUT IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION—2**

“If enacted, these bills could lead to separation of family members that would not take place under current federal law,” the bishops said. “We believe it would be far better to withdraw these bills than to risk costly and unfairly punitive enforcement.”

The bishops once again called on the U.S. Congress to finally address the broken immigration system in the country with comprehensive reform legislation. They also reiterated their hope that the elected officials of Arizona will be guided by a concern for the vulnerable in the society.

“We are grateful for legislative support of measures to protect unborn children, to promote the protection of marriage as a foundational institution in our society, and to expand educational opportunities for all children through school choice,” the bishops said. “At the same time, however, we are concerned with high profile measures relating to immigration that we believe could be detrimental to public safety and that could divide families.”

The full text of the statement from the Arizona Catholic Conference Bishops is available at [www.azcatholicconference.org](http://www.azcatholicconference.org).

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