

One Hundred Religious Leaders Weigh In on Driver's License Debate

Interfaith Delegation Travels to Santa Fe to Submit Open Letter to Legislators

Santa Fe—Over 100 religious leaders from over a dozen faith affiliations submitted an open letter on Wednesday to New Mexico's legislators in support of the law that requires undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses. A delegation of 12 pastors and rabbi's from central and northern New Mexico traveled to the Capitol to deliver the letter and speak personally with House and Senate members about the breadth of religious support and to warn about the effects of the anti-immigrant fervor "that now threatens our state."

"We have followed with increasing alarm the level of vitriol that the effort to repeal this law has engendered within the chambers of government, the press, and our public discourse," the letter states. "By labeling members of our immigrant communities 'criminals and terrorists,' it further marginalizes them and their families. This hate-filled rhetoric, unprecedented in New Mexico, is dangerous and must be challenged."

Rev. Dr. Holly Beaumont, Director of Interfaith Worker Justice New Mexico, said on behalf of the group, "115 pastors, clergy, rabbi's and other religious leaders have signed on to this letter from over 25 communities in New Mexico. These are religious leaders who are on the ground gauging the impact of the divisive rhetoric we've seen as a result of this debate. We implore our elected leaders to not only weigh the public safety benefits of having all drivers in our state licensed, but also the chilling effect of this anti immigrant campaign on our families and on all of us who remember history. It is clear to us that what is at stake for New Mexico is our core values as a people. How we treat others reflects on our own humanity. We become what we do, for good or for evil."

Delegation:

1. Rev. Dr. Holly Beaumont, Interfaith Worker Justice –NM, Santa Fe
2. Rabbi Marvin Schwab, Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe
3. Rev. Brandon Johnson, Associate Minister, United Church of Santa Fe
4. Rev. Chester Toppo, Westminster Presbyterian, Santa Fe
5. Rabbi Malka Drucker, Congregation HaMakom, Santa Fe
6. Rev. Mary Ann Lundy, Elder, First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
7. Rev. Donald J. Wilson, First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
8. Rev. Liz McMaster, Unitarian Universalist, Albuquerque
9. Rev. Jay W. Spoonheim, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Los Alamos
10. Rev. Stephen Phinney, UUA Westside Congregation, Rio Rancho
11. Rev. Randy Campbell, First Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas
12. Rev. Rocky Schuster, St. James Episcopal Church, Taos
13. Rev. John Oerter, Transitional Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque