

## **An Open Letter from New Mexico Religious Leaders to the New Mexico State Legislators**

Wednesday, September 21st, 2011

We, the undersigned, representing faith traditions from across our state, are compelled to join our voices in support of the 2003 law that requires New Mexico residents to obtain drivers' licenses regardless of their immigration status.

In the eight years since it was passed, this law has served its purpose and benefited our state by reducing the number of uninsured drivers on our roads, generating needed revenue, and providing a data base used by police, courts, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to identify and locate suspects.

We are dismayed that those who seek to repeal this law seem willing to sacrifice these benefits for reasons that are both unsubstantiated and grounded in fear.

We agree that laws should be reviewed and revised when necessary. We support proposed reforms that would strengthen the original intent of this law. However, repealing this law does nothing to address the need for comprehensive federal immigration reform.

Historically, culturally and economically New Mexico has been richly blessed by our immigrant families, a point passionately and eloquently expressed by members of our state legislature. New Mexico has been a model for the nation by creating immigration policies that reflect our cherished values and traditions. We fear that legacy is at risk.

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. 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.

Repealing this law will not satisfy those who oppose it. It will open the flood gates to the anti-immigrant fervor that is sweeping our nation, and now threatens our state. If this law is repealed what will be next? How will you stop this movement once it has gained momentum?

It is clear to us that what is at stake in 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. The Golden Rule is universal. The Talmud teaches: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary." From a Christian perspective, the true aliens are those who fail to see in the eyes of the stranger a mirror of themselves and the image of God we share.

We are deeply concerned that the effort to repeal this law has been a distraction from addressing the real and urgent issues that we face, including our state budget crisis, funding our schools, providing health care, and creating sustainable jobs. According to the latest census report, poverty in New Mexico has increased to almost 19%. The responsibility to address this human crisis weighs heavily on our shoulders as well as yours as public servants.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus warns us that on the last day governments will be judged by how we treat "the least of these among us."

What has happened to us that 10,000 of our immigrant brothers and sisters can be rounded up to re-verify their drivers' licenses? This action had a chilling effect on our immigrant communities and on those of us who remember history.

Immigration has become the civil rights issue of our time.

Throughout history God's children have been uprooted and forced to leave their homes to survive. The Bible teaches that the sojourner, refugee and migrant who reside among us are to be treated as our native-born because "you were once strangers in a strange land." Canadian Rabbi David Seed stated: "Put yourselves in their shoes, or better yet, in those of your grandparents, great grandparents, whoever it was who first came to this country."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us: "The ultimate measure of a people is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy." Indeed, those who rise to this challenge are the history makers who are remembered and revered.

With your courage to defend and retain this law we will assure dignity and fairness to those who seek only to be what we all hope to be – contributing members of society able to provide for our families in an environment where our work ethic and abilities are recognized and appreciated. May it always be so.

Please note: The congregations and/or organizations listed below are for identification purposes only. These signatures represent the position of the individual clergy and religious leaders who have signed on in support.

Faithfully,

1. Armando Segovia, Minister of Pueblo de Dios Pentecostal Church, Gallup
2. Barbara Free, Justice Council, First Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Albuquerque
3. Bob Gaines, Santa Fe Friends Meeting, Santa Fe
4. Br. Jim Brown, Roman Catholic, De La Salle Christian Brothers, Hilary House Community, Santa Fe
5. Carol Johnson, IWJ-NM, Santa Maria de la Paz Catholic Community, Santa Fe
6. Charles Cole, IWJ-NM, St. John's United Methodist, Santa Fe
7. Charles Plough, First Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Albuquerque
8. Cheryl Klenner, All Saints Lutheran Church, Albuquerque
9. Daniel Yohalem, Vice President of Congregation, Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe
10. Deacon Durrall W. Carroll, Our Lady Queen of Angels Liberal Catholic Church, Rio Rancho
11. Deacon Edwin Esquibel, Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, La Joya
12. Deacon Jesus Herrera, Maria Imaculada Catholic Church, Dexter

13. Deborah Cornelius, Justice and Peace Committee, St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Santa Fe
14. Dianne Wood, Interfaith Worker Justice-NM, Santa Fe
15. Donald E. Spoonheim, Church of the Servant, (ELCA), Santa Fe
16. Dr. Kathleen O'Malley, New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice, Albuquerque
17. Dr. Maralyn E. Toman, Social Action Committee, Unitarian Universalist, Rio Rancho
18. Fr. Bryan Jurene, SSSC, Our Lady of Grace, Artesia
19. Fr. Juan Carlos Ramirez, St. Helen Catholic Church, Hobbs
20. Fr. Juan Montoya, Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish, Alamogordo
21. Fr. Manuel Ibarra, St. Thomas Catholic Parish, Roswell
22. Fr. Vincent Chavez, St. Therese Catholic Church, Albuquerque
23. Gayle Thompson Prinkey, Unitarian Universalist, Rio Rancho
24. Isa A. Spoonheim, IWJ-NM Board of Directors, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Los Alamos
25. Jane Asche, Unitarian Universalist Church of Las Cruces, Las Cruces
26. Jay Johnson, Member, Disciples of Christ, Justice Action Network, Albuquerque
27. Jim Prewitt, Elder, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
28. Joan Lamunyon Sanford, Interfaith Worker Justice-NM, Rio Rancho
29. John Bulten, Co-Director, East Central Ministries, Inc., Albuquerque
30. John Ellig, First Unitarian Church Albuquerque, Albuquerque
31. June LeCrone, First Unitarian Church, Albuquerque
32. Karen Finney, IWJ-NM, First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
33. Kathy Christison, Chair, Justice and Peace Committee, St. Bede's Episcopal, Santa Fe
34. Kathy Sanchez, Women's Spiritual Leadership, San Ildefonso Pueblo
35. Lydia Pendley, Justice and Peace Committee, St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Santa Fe
36. Lynn F. Lee, Justice and Peace Committee, St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Santa Fe
37. Lynne Canning, Board of Directors, Interfaith Worker Justice, Santa Fe
38. Marcelo Silva, Iglesia Apostolica de la Fe en Cristo Jesus, Albuquerque
39. Mary J. Kuhns, retired, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Santa Fe
40. Mary Jo Lundy, Lay Pastor, Embudo Presbyterian Church, Dixon
41. Max Bartlett, Elder, Co-Chair, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
42. Meredith C. Tilp, Justice and Peace Committee, St. Bede's Church, Santa Fe
43. Mikki Aronoff, Albuquerque Friends Meeting, Albuquerque
44. Minister Martin Lopez, Maranata Baptist Church of Gamerco, Gallup
45. Minister Ruben Rivera, Monte Zion Assembly of God Church, Gallup
46. Monsignor Richard Olona, Risen Savior Catholic Community, Albuquerque
47. Mother Superior Magda García, Casa Reina, Sisters of our Lady of Guadalupe, Gallup
48. Nichoe Lichen, Southside Friends Quaker Worship Group, Santa Fe
49. Pastor Abel Pulgarin, Unidos Para Cristo Christian Church, Clovis
50. Pastor Lupita Pulgarin, Unidos Para Cristo Christian Church, Clovis
51. Pastor Maria Castillo, Unidos Para Cristo Christian Church, Portales
52. Pastor Mike Rodriguez, Unidos Para Cristo Christian Church, Clovis
53. Pastor Moises Comenero First Christian Church/Viento de Gracia, Santa Fe
54. Pastor Obed Velasquez, Iglesia Apostolica de La Fey en Cristo Jesus, Ruidoso
55. Pastor Ramón Robledo, First Baptist Church of Ruidoso Downs, Ruidoso
56. Pastor Sara Rodriguez, Unidos Para Cristo Christian Church, Clovis
57. Pastor Victor Castillo, Unidos Para Cristo Christian Church, Portales
58. Pat Stover, President, UU Westside Congregation, Rio Rancho
59. Rabbi Deborah J. Brin, Congregation Nahalat Shalom, Albuquerque
60. Rabbi Malka Drucker, Congregation HaMakom, Santa Fe
61. Rabbi Marvin Schwab, Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe
62. Rabbi Nahum Ward-Lev, Scholar-in-Residence, Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe
63. Rene Ronquillo, Casa de las Comunidades Catholic Worker, Albuquerque
64. Renee Wolters, First Unitarian, NM Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice, Albuquerque
65. Rev. Angela Herrera, Assistant Minister, First Unitarian Church, Albuquerque
66. Rev. Benjamin Larzelere, Christ Lutheran Church (ELCA), Santa Fe

67. Rev. Brandon Johnson, Associate Minister, United Church of Santa Fe, Santa Fe
68. Rev. Chester Topple, Pastor, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
69. Rev. Dalene Fuller Rogers, United Church of Christ, Las Cruces
70. Rev. Daniel Erdman, Pastor, Iglesia Congregacional Unida (UCC), Albuquerque
71. Rev. Dean Lewis, Presbyterian, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
72. Rev. Donald J. Wilson, First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
73. Rev. Dr. Holly Beaumont, Interfaith Worker Justice-NM, Santa Fe
74. Rev. Dr. James Leehan, St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Santa Fe
75. Rev. Judith L. Maynard, Senior Pastor Metropolitan Community Church, Albuquerque
76. Rev. Dr. Leona Stucky-Abbott, Unitarian Universalist Community Minister, Santa Fe
77. Rev. Dr. Roger B. Knapp, Church Council, United Church of Santa Fe, (UCC), Santa Fe
78. Rev. Dr. Wayne Hawkins, Pastor, Iglesia del Pueblo Hispanic Presbyterian Church, Las Cruces
79. Rev. Frank Yate, Pastor, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
80. Rev. Gail Mariner, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Fe, Eldorado
81. Rev. Guillermo Yela, Camino de Vida Hispanic/Latino Ministry, Albuquerque
82. Rev. Henry Hoffman, Assistant to the Bishop, Reformed Episcopal Church, Albuquerque
83. Rev. J. David Wiseman, Transitional Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
84. Rev. J.R. (Randy) Campbell, First United Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas
85. Rev. Jay W. Spoonheim, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Los Alamos
86. Rev. John Oerter, Transitional Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
87. Rev. Karen G. Hill, Associate Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
88. Rev. Liz McMaster, First Unitarian Universalist, Albuquerque
89. Rev. Mark Denton, West Mesa Christian Church, Rio Rancho
90. Rev. Mary Ann Lundy, Elder, First Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
91. Rev. Nancy Anderson, Unitarian Universalist Church of Las Cruces, Las Cruces
92. Rev. Owen Kunkle, Deacon, St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Santa Fe
93. Rev. Pamela Gilchrist, Peace and Social Concerns, Friends Meeting, Santa Fe
94. Rev. Randy Lutz, St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Santa Fe
95. Rev. Richard C. Rowe, Minister of the Presbytery of Santa Fe, Santa Fe
96. Rev. Richard Murphy, Rector, St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Santa Fe
97. Rev. Robert Woodruff, Second Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
98. Rev. Rocky Schuster, Rector, St. James Episcopal Church, Taos
99. Rev. Seth Finch, Presbyterian Church (USA), Albuquerque
100. Rev. Stephen Phinney, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Rio Rancho
101. Rev. Stephen Wiard, pastor, El Pueblito United Methodist Church, Taos
102. Rev. Talitha Arnold, Senior Minister, The United Church of Christ of Santa Fe, Santa Fe
103. Rev. Trey Hammond, La Mesa Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
104. Rhonda Newby-Torres, Co-Director East Central Ministries, Inc., Albuquerque
105. Ruth Hoffman, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-NM, Santa Fe
106. Sandra Hareld, M.Div., Loretto Community Co-member, Jemez Springs
107. Senior Pastor Luis Madrid, Taos of Assembly of God Church, Taos
108. Sharon Frey Prewitt, Elder, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque
109. Sonya Berg, Social Action Committee, Las Vegas Unitarian Universalist, Rociada
110. Sr. Anne Salaun, Religious of the Assumption, Chaparral
111. Sr. Penny McMullen, Sisters of Loretto Catholic Community, Santa Fe
112. Sr. Sylvia Sedillo, Sisters of Loretto Catholic Community, Albuquerque
113. Susan Odiseos, IWJ-NM, Justice and Peace Committee, St. Bede's Episcopal, Santa Fe
114. Tomas Rivera, Board of Directors, Interfaith Worker Justice-NM, Santa Fe
115. William E. Hershey, First Congregational Church (UCC), Albuquerque

