



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

June 9, 2009

Dear Members of the United States House of Representatives,

I am writing on behalf of Church World Service, a 63-year-old faith-based humanitarian organization that extends disaster assistance, social and economic development and refugee protection to people around the world. As an organization concerned with the well-being of immigrant families, we urge you to co-sponsor H.R. 2709, the Reuniting Families Act, introduced by Representatives Michael Honda (D-CA), Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), and Linda Sanchez (D-CA).

The United States Senate has the opportunity to reunite the families of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents. In many cases, the families covered by this bill have been separated for decades as their cases have stalled in the backlogged and bureaucratic immigration system. They deserve – and the United States deserves – a more efficient process by which people can be admitted to the United States and join their family members.

The Reuniting Families Act would reduce lengthy backlogs by rightfully classifying lawful permanent resident spouses and children as "immediate relatives." The bill would increase family unity by granting individuals in a permanent partnership the ability to obtain family-based visas to which they currently lack access. It would also distribute visas more equitably between countries, increasing the per country limit from 7% to 10%, thus reducing the backlog without increasing visa numbers. If enacted, the bill would recapture unused visas and allow families to reunite despite the death of the main petitioner or arbitrary bars to entry. It would also recognize the sacrifices of our military by exempting children of World War II Filipino veterans from numerical caps.

If Congress fails to act, the tragedy of broken families will continue as spouses are separated from each other and children are separated from a parent, or in some cases, both parents. By allowing family separation to continue due to our broken immigration laws, the United States is complicit in impeding the emotional, social, and intellectual growth of children and decreasing the economic contribution of entire family units.

The fundamental question posed by the Reuniting Families Act is whether the United States will uphold family unity as a priority of our immigration system. By enacting this bill to reunite families in a timely manner, we will be increasing the integrity of our legal system for all Americans, securing our economic future, and giving families the opportunity to truly pursue the American Dream. On behalf of Church World Service, I urge you to consider the plight of all families affected by our immigration system and uphold the integrity of the family unit by co-sponsoring H.R. 2709, the Reuniting Families Act.

Sincerely,

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