

R-3a Resolution Commending Study of the Episcopal Church's Policy on Immigration and Refugee Issues and Consideration of New Ministries to Support Immigrants and our Latino Members, Congregations, and Neighbors

Resolved, by the 231st Convention of the Diocese of Virginia, that Convention remind our congregations, clergy, and people about The Episcopal Church's policies in support of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and condemning inhumane policies, and be it further

Resolved, that the churches, clergy, and people of the Diocese of Virginia be made aware of and asked to donate to Bishop Stevenson's Immigration Assistance Fund, established to assist congregations with members experiencing difficulties with their immigration status, and be it further

Resolved, that this Convention urge our congregations, clergy, and people to continue their ministries which support immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in our congregations and communities, and to find new ways to respect the dignity of every human being in line with our baptismal covenant.

Resolved, that the Diocese of VA will not knowingly collaborate with ICE agents or with law enforcement or other federal agents working in the capacity of cooperating with the DHS and ICE in immigration enforcement for the purposes of immigrant detention, outside of complying with legal requirements (e.g., a valid judicial warrant) and be it further

Resolved, that for the purposes of this amendment that "cooperation" and "collaboration with immigration enforcement" constitutes allowing agents acting in the capacity of immigration enforcement onto church property, giving immigration status information of employees, congregants, parishioners, or community members to authorities, and giving names, addresses, and other identifying information to authorities.

Submitted by:

Submitted by The Reverend Julie D Bryant,
for the South Fairfax Regional Council
*Jackson K. Martinez, UVA Collegiate Delegate
*Olivia C. Andres, VCU Collegiate Delegate
*Gabriel M. Dole, GMU Collegiate Delegate
*Jordan S. Tan, JMU Collegiate Delegate
*Marvin T. Stearns, UMW Collegiate Delegate

* Submitters of an amendment consisting of the third and fourth resolves.

Required Statements:

This resolution has no financial impact on the Diocesan Budget.

This resolution does not conflict with the Constitution or Canons of The Episcopal Church or The Diocese.

Rationale:

More than a million immigrants live in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Ten percent of the population identify as Latine, with a significant concentration of Latine and other immigrant communities in Northern Virginia. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the Commonwealth is increasing, leaving a real and pervasive sense of dread, fear, and vulnerability for many, including even persons in compliance with immigration and citizenship documentation requirements, and for United States citizens. This resolution proposed for the 231st Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia would bring the work of The Episcopal Church in relation to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to the attention of our congregations, clergy, and people and ask them to discern and implement new ministries that would show our love and support for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers as required by scripture.

In addition, this resolution highlights the Episcopal Church's strong policies and ministries which support immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and resettlement efforts and resolutions which now define the policy of our Church. Among them are:

- **Migration with Dignity:** The 81st General Convention passed Resolution 2024-C031, which declares the Church's support for "Migration with Dignity" and calls for governing bodies to protect the human rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.
- **Advocacy for comprehensive reform:** Directed by 2024-D067 and 2018-C033, the Episcopal Church advocates for comprehensive immigration reform, including creating pathways to citizenship, preserving the right to asylum, and supporting policies like Temporary Protected Status (TPS).
- **Opposition to harmful practices:** The church has also passed resolutions opposing certain practices, such as the increased use of electronic monitoring of immigrants and the use of detention as a primary method for processing migrants.
- **Support for resettlement and ministries:** The Episcopal Church supports the work of Episcopal Migration Ministries, which resettles refugees, and encourages dioceses and congregations to engage in welcoming and advocacy programs.
- **Ecumenical and interfaith support:** The Church has signed declarations with other religious organizations, such as Church World Service, to publicly support immigrant communities.
- **Affirm comprehensive immigration reform** to include: Keeping families together, Respecting the United States Bill of Rights, Honoring Human and Worker Rights, Providing a Pathway to Citizenship (2018-C033).
- Urge all governments to keep their commitments and legal obligations to **respect the rights and dignity of all people**, including access to justice and social services, while recognizing the complexity of developing just immigration policies in any country, and the legitimate need to protect borders and address security threats to sovereign nations (2018-D009) and call for an immediate end to the inhumane practice of family detention. (2015-D033).
- Support U.S. executive policies that **deemphasize immigrant enforcement action against those who have not committed felony crimes** (2018-A178) and (2018-C009).

- **Anti-family detention and separation.** Urge for a halt to the implementation and intensification of inhumane and unjust immigration policies and practices (2018-A178).
- **Stress biblical basis of support for resident aliens:** Urge our members, as people of faith and people of conscience, pledge to challenge and question any unjust immigration law, policy, or practice that is inconsistent with our biblical mandate to “not wrong or oppress a resident alien” (Exodus 22:21) (2018-C009).

Rationale for the amendment consisting of the third and fourth resolves:

Some churches have already made noncompliance their official policy, and making this a diocesan policy helps to support churches in their stance.

This resolution calls to condemn inhumane policies. Our proposed amendment names what those inhumane policies are and makes clear that we are both condemning and not complying with those policies.

The Diocese of VA has recognized that ICE employs harmful tactics to surveil and detain immigrants. We therefore have a responsibility to prevent more people being harmed by these tactics.

In the effort to respect the US laws, this is a noncompliance policy, not an explicit safe-haven policy. Individuals have a right to refuse to answer questions from ICE agents provided there is not a signed judicial warrant. Without a warrant, compliance with immigration enforcement is voluntary rather than mandatory.

Additionally, ICE has become a form of racial discrimination against our Black and brown siblings, regardless of citizenship status. We have a responsibility to oppose and refuse to comply in a system of racial oppression.