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NEWS RELEASE

Ahead of the State of the Union, United States Bishops from Border States Call for Reforms to Immigration Enforcement in the Nation

ALBUQUERQUE—Monday, February 24, 2026 —IMMEDIATE RELEASE— Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, in solidarity with bishops from border states, released a joint statement underscoring the Catholic Church's deep concern for immigrants and their families.

Archbishop Wester understands the complexities and controversies surrounding immigration in our country today and hopes Catholic social teaching may help bring greater moral clarity to this urgent issue.

The bishops' statement, he notes, "puts some meat on the bones" of the US bishops' November message opposing mass deportations and reflects what many pastors are witnessing firsthand. The bishops express profound concern about what is happening to immigrants, the vast majority of whom contribute to the nation. At the same time, many at the border are the first witnesses to those fleeing violence and instability who are denied protection. While affirming the importance of respecting and obeying the law, the statement emphasizes that laws must be just and carried out in a manner that respects the dignity of every human person.

In a [statement released Tuesday, February 24](#), ahead of the 2026 State of the Union address, 19 US Catholic bishops stated that several reforms should be made to how immigration enforcement is conducted across the nation.

In their statement, the bishops laid out several areas in need of positive change, including 1) the restoration of asylum in the immigration system, particularly at the border; 2) a restoration of the prohibition of enforcement in sensitive locations, such as places of worship, schools, and health-care facilities; 3) the restoration of due process in immigration proceedings; 4) the halt of intimidation and fear tactics in enforcement efforts; 5) an emphasis on family unity by keeping mixed-status families together in the US; 6) the use of alternatives to detention instead of the expansion of detention; and 7) support for reintegration programs in countries of origin.

In the area of detention, the bishops stated the expansion of detention centers across the nation is of "grave concern" and urged that detention standards be upheld. They also argued that families, children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities should not be detained and that detainees should have the right to religious freedom, including attending Mass and receiving the sacraments.

In their statement, the bishops acknowledged the right of the government to enforce the law, but added that "those laws should be upheld in a manner that protects the God-given human dignity and rights of the human person." They also reaffirmed the US Bishops' *Special Message* in November 2025 opposing "the indiscriminate mass deportation of people," stating that mass deportations are "detrimental to the human rights of our fellow human beings and not in the best interest of the nation."

In addition, the bishops reiterated the long-held position of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) that "those immigrants and their families who have built equities in our country and are otherwise law-abiding—the vast majority of the undocumented—should be given an opportunity to come out of the shadows and earn their citizenship over time, becoming full legal members of and contributors to their communities and the nation."

A copy of the statement can be found [here](#).

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