

Clergy, White House talk about immigration reform: Care for the neighbor

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On the heels of a rally on the National Mall by advocates of immigration reform, religious leaders met at the White House on March 22 to plot strategy, despite a packed election-year political calendar.

Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, said Latino Christians are frustrated with the slow movement on immigration reform and with the growing numbers of deportations.

Still, Rodriguez said he hopes President Obama will use some of the same strategies he used with health-care reform—including a national address— to address immigration reform. “It’s time to get to work and see some outcomes,” Rodriguez said.

Jim Wallis, president of the anti-poverty group Sojourners, said the faith community is ready to help Obama mobilize the grass roots.

“There has never been more unity on this issue in the faith community,” said Wallis, describing the commitment from the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, and Catholic and Jewish leaders who participated in the White House meeting.

With the attention on health care in recent months and continuing focus on efforts to spur job creation, the leaders acknowledged the need for pragmatism by the White House. But they hope immigration reform can be addressed before the midterm elections in November.

“Things happen in God’s time,” said Peg Chamberlin, president of the National Council of Churches, as a loud thunderclap rang out above the White House. “I think God’s time is about care for the neighbor, and it’s time for that.” *—Religion News*

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