

American Baptists applaud moves toward immigration reform

by [Bob Allen](#) in the [March 6, 2013](#) issue

Leaders of the American Baptist Churches USA who serve in ministry to immigrants and refugees welcomed a bipartisan framework unveiled by eight senators who are being called the “gang of eight” for their public effort to get the ball rolling on legislation to rewrite the nation’s immigration laws.

Officials at American Baptist Home Mission Societies applauded the proposed plan for comprehensive reform brought forward January 28 by Democrats Chuck Schumer, Dick Durbin, Bob Menendez and Michael Bennet and Republicans John McCain, Lindsey Graham, Marco Rubio and Jeff Flake.

The Senate framework would provide a path to citizenship for the estimated 11 million immigrants already in the country illegally, secure the border, simplify legal immigration and cut down on the hiring of immigrants lacking a green card.

President Obama outlined his ideas on the subject in a speech January 29 in Las Vegas that in some details was more liberal, including less emphasis on securing borders. However, the president welcomed the Senate initiative to take up the thorny issues. Republicans have agreed that it is urgent for their party to broaden its appeal to Latino voters.

Praise for the senators from the ABCUSA is not surprising because American Baptists “have been at the forefront of welcoming immigrants into our country and into our churches,” said Aidsand Wright-Riggins, head of the domestic mission arm. “No one racial or ethnic group holds majority membership” in the denomination, he said.

Praise for the senators’ bipartisan step was also voiced by Aundreia Alexander, national coordinator for American Baptists’ immigration and refugee services.

Alexander serves on the steering committee of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, a collection of 38 Christian, Jewish, Muslim and humanitarian organizations calling for humane immigration reform.

American Baptist Home Mission Societies was formed in 1832 for missionary work on the American frontier. “God has woven us into a coat of many colors, and we are a reflection of the American family. We are pleased with the legislative framework that is in line with our biblical call to welcome the stranger among us.” —ABP