

American Jewish Committee

**Statement on Immigration Enforcement:
Employer Sanctions and Border Fence**

(Adopted by the Board of Governors, December 11, 2006)

In 2001, the American Jewish Committee reaffirmed its commitment to “fair and generous immigration policies, as fundamentally good for the United States and consistent with Jewish values.” At the same time, AJC stated that it is “committed more than ever to the need to increase the security of our nation’s borders and to better incorporate newcomers into American society and culture.” Specifically, with respect to security concerns, AJC emphasized the need for “improvements in the system that tracks foreign nationals who enter and leave the U.S.” and “improved enforcement of applicable laws for those who overstay their visas.”

As the national debate on immigration has continued to heat up, AJC has endorsed a comprehensive approach to immigration reform that joins enforcement with a path to legalization, and ultimately citizenship, for the undocumented, as well as a “more flexible temporary visa program that provides participants an opportunity for earned legalization and that realistically reflects our [nation’s labor] needs.”

Comprehensive immigration reform legislation proposed during this Congress includes many of the proposals endorsed by AJC delineated above. However, the agency either has opposing policy or no policy on a few of the enforcement provisions contained in the legislation. Specifically, bills considered in both the House of Representatives and Senate require the creation of a mandatory electronic work-eligibility verification system and provide for “employer sanctions” that penalize employers for the knowing employment of unauthorized immigrants. In the past, AJC has opposed employer sanctions due to concerns that such programs might encourage discriminatory employment practices. After careful reconsideration, however, the American Jewish Committee would support a comprehensive immigration reform package that includes employer sanctions so long as those sanctions are accompanied by the creation of and investment in an effective, modern, and accurate mandatory document verification system with adequate safeguards to protect workers from discrimination in the workplace.

The House and Senate have passed legislation that provides for the building of several hundred miles of fencing along the borders of the United States. Additional legislation addressing this issue may well be proposed in the near future. AJC takes no position with regard to such fencing, and its support for a comprehensive immigration reform bill as described above does not turn on the inclusion or omission of such provisions.
