



HISPANIC BAPTIST PASTORS ALLIANCE

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Our Response to President Trump's Immigration-Related Executive Orders

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK - As Christian pastors, and Hispanic Southern Baptist Convention leaders, we have witnessed with sadness and concern the immigration-related Executive Orders signed by President Trump on January 25 and 27 and subsequently clarified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Here is the summary of what the Hispanic Community is going through since November of last year:

- **Fear, but why?**
 - ✓ After a campaign that began by casting Mexican immigrants as rapists and criminals and a statement by the candidate that that Speaker of the House Paul Ryan described as *"the textbook definition of a racist comment,"* President Trump has now called for the hiring of 10,000 additional Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, indicating a clear intention to expand immigration enforcement.
 - ✓ As clarified by a recent memo from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, it is clear that the new Administration's prioritization of "criminals" for enforcement is defined much more broadly than by past administrations, encompassing not just those convicted of serious violent crimes such as murder or rape—which we would affirm as priorities for enforcement—but those either convicted or merely suspected of having committed any violation of criminal code, including the misdemeanor offense of unlawfully entering the country. This expanded definition puts a far greater share of the Hispanic population in our country and within our congregations at risk of deportation.

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- ✓ According to the United States Constitution, everyone has the right to a “due process”, where they can appear before a judge and plead their case regardless of the crime. These new policies make clear that an ICE officer may prioritize an individual for enforcement based solely on their suspicion that the person meets their expanded definition of a “criminal,” without any requirement of a conviction. Due process is bypassed, and many Hispanics are concerned that their ethnicity alone may lead agents to profile them and suspect that they meet this broad de. Hence the fear.
- **What are we seeing today?**
 - ✓ Hispanics are having incredibly tough and sad conversations right now with their children because when their children come home from school, mom or dad may be gone for good. It’s already happening through ICE raids.
 - ✓ Hispanic families are being advised to formalize legal plans for who will become the legal guardians(s) of their children in the event that they are detained or deported. Many are making financial arrangements for the provision of their children in such an instance.
 - ✓ Many families have packed everything in case ICE comes to their house. They are living out of suitcases, so that their children (generally U.S.-born citizens) will hopefully be allowed to relocate to other family members’ homes when parents are taken.
 - ✓ A decrease in attendance in our Sunday services because Hispanic brethren are afraid to be arrested on the way there, and/or, as we have seen happen already, receive a call that one of their family members has been arrested by ICE.

Just imagine the trauma these families are living with as parents and children face the daily fear of losing each other. In many cases, these are mixed-status families, where the majority of the family are U.S. citizens but one or both parents are undocumented. This issue is too complicated to simply "remove undocumented people." Americans are going to lose their families. This is not what our country stands for.

As a community of pastors, we disagree with this social injustice and for this reason we have put in writing our position as the **Hispanic Baptist Pastors Alliance**:

These new guidelines create anxiety and concerns about the future of the members of our church and their families. Using the local police as immigration agents, as the new executive orders call for, can lead to the breach of civil rights. Furthermore, this new system takes them away from their true work, which is the protection of communities. Finally, it creates fear and

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distrust among the immigrant community towards all law enforcement agencies, which means they will be less likely to come forward as witnesses to violent crimes, when they are victims of domestic abuse, or to report cases of child abuse.

To the extent that rogue officers “suspect” someone of having entered the country unlawfully or having committed some other violation of law based merely on their skin tone or an accent, these new policies will affect all immigrants, whether they have a legal status or not.

As an alliance of churches, we are doing our part guiding our members through this challenging time by helping them understand their citizenship is in heaven. We have taught our congregations that the reason why they came to this country, was not what they initially believed it was. It wasn't because they were chasing the American dream but because God was chasing them, drawing them to Jesus. It was here where many of them came to know Christ and no matter where they go from this place, their new objective in life is the proclamation of the Gospel.

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About Hispanic Baptist Pastors Alliance

We are a network of Hispanic Southern Baptist pastors who want to see Christ exalted and His Word proclaimed in the Hispanic community and in Spanish-speaking congregations.

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