

Evangelical Leaders Plan Big Immigration Reform Push

[Pema Levy](#) November 13, 2012, 3:13 PM 5139

A large number of evangelical organizations, including 150 evangelical leaders, plan to play a major role in the push for immigration reform. A coalition of evangelical organizations from across the political spectrum on Tuesday released [letters](#) to the White House and leaders in the Senate and House of Representatives, urging action on a comprehensive immigration reform bill within the first 92 days of the second Obama administration.

In the letters, members of a diverse group of evangelical organizations called the Evangelical Immigration Table asked to meet with President Obama and Congressional leaders in the first 92 days to discuss reform. The group called for a bipartisan bill that emphasizes the dignity of every person, guarantees secure national borders and “establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents.”

Founded in June, just days before President Obama announced his administration’s deferred action program for DREAMers, the Table claims support from groups across the political spectrum, including members of the Southern Baptist Convention and Focus on the Family on the right and Sojourners on the center-left.

On a conference call with reporters Tuesday, members of the Table said they were hopeful immigration reform would pass, explained reform is a priority for the evangelical community and stressed the group’s work shoring up support for reform both on the national level and in local communities.

“When everybody’s talking about polarization, this Table is showing a united front that’s unprecedented on one of the most intractable issues of our day,” Rev. Gabriel Salguero, one of the heads of the group and president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, said on the call.

Over the past several years, growth in the evangelical community has come disproportionately from Latinos, making the issue a priority for many evangelical groups and their leaders. Speakers on the call stressed that the evangelical community’s embrace of reform comes both from the teachings of the Bible and the fact that Latinos are increasingly a part of their community.

“This for us is a conversion issue,” Jim Wallis, president and CEO of Sojourners group, said Tuesday. “It’s really what we have — we’ve been changed by Jesus Christ on this, what the Bible says”

“As in the evangelical community, people have become more familiar with what the Bible has to say — and that’s by far the majority issue,” said Leith Anderson, president of the National

Association of Evangelicals. He also said the recognition that many immigrants are evangelicals has helped raise the enthusiasm for reform.

While those on the call indicated they did have to work to educate their own congregations about reform, they said concern about it is lessening and support growing

According to the Pew Research Center, 16 percent of all Latino voters are evangelicals. A [Pew poll](#) in October found that 50 percent of Latino evangelical voters preferred Obama while 39 percent indicated they would vote for Mitt Romney. Compared to Catholic and unaffiliated Latinos, evangelicals are by far the reddest among Latino voters. In Washington, Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) have resumed talks on a reform bill that were cut off in 2010.

<http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2012/11/evangelical-immigration-reform.php>