



Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
UU advocacy in the nation's capital



Write Here! Write Now!

Contact: advocacy@uusj.org or 202.600.9132

Delivery of Letters - Organizers: All Letters due by Thursday, Sept. 17, 3pmET

NEW try doing an individual letter online [HERE](#). Letter [Submission Form \(upload\)](#)

Email by Thursday, September 17 by 6:00pmET to advocacy@uusj.org.

Mail to: ***NEW*** UUSJ c/o Paulette DeMers, 3745 Tech Dr NW, Rochester MN 55901

Tell your Senators to provide Immigrants access to aid in the next COVID relief bill and to strengthen oversight of DHS

Why are we writing? Our UU Principles compel us to affirm that all immigrants, regardless of legal status, should be treated justly and humanely. This belief is amplified by our denomination's 2013 Statement of Conscience on "Immigration as a Moral Issue" and the 2019 Action of Immediate Witness "Protect the Rights of immigrants and Asylum Seekers."

Why now? The Senate hasn't passed a new COVID relief bill. As negotiations resume, testing, treatment, as well as relief payments, must go to all vulnerable families-- regardless of citizenship status. Also, the Senate will take up FY21 funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and senators must insist that **DHS does not reprogram funds from other agencies** to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for enforcement, family separation, or border wall construction.

Background: The HEROES Act, passed in May by the House, included COVID testing and financial relief for immigrants who were left out of earlier bills, but the Senate has not yet passed a new COVID relief bill. Additionally, in DHS appropriations, ICE/CBP have been called out for mismanagement. The main leverage that Congress now has is over appropriations to run the agency for FY21. Just passing a continuing resolution now will mean sustained suffering and uncertainty for thousands of immigrants as well as asylum-seekers.

Earlier COVID relief bills excluded immigrants without Social Security numbers and their families, who are among the hardest-hit communities, from any assistance. ICE/CBP continue to take actions contrary to enacted legislation, separate children from their families, detain immigrants unnecessarily, and spend billions on a border wall. UUSJ supports all the provisions that would strengthen Congressional oversight in the pending House DHS appropriations bill ([H.R.7669](#)): (i) prohibit use of funds beyond the minimum amount appropriated to be used for constructing border barriers, (ii) stop ICE from deporting US residents who are willing to accept custody of unaccompanied minors, (iii) allow migrants access to legal counsel and ensure they are advised of their rights when held in CBP custody. HR7669 reduces FY21 funding for ICE and CBP below FY20 enacted levels, and the Senate must retain that strengthened oversight.

UU Grounding: Our 1st UU Principle affirms the inherent worth and dignity of all people. Our 2nd Principle calls for justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. UUs have faithfully fought for compassionate immigration reform and an end to mass detention and deportation. We strongly support a just and equitable reform of our nation's immigration laws. In the meantime, we must ask Congress to take immediate action to alleviate the suffering of thousands of immigrants. No human being is illegal.

Key Message and Ask: The Senate version of FY21 appropriations for DHS must include the House caveats and provisions for oversight. The Senate must also include immigrants in the next COVID relief bill, treating such families with compassion and dignity.

(see other side for suggested talking points and sample letter)

Suggested Talking Points

[Use your own examples, tell your story or draw on these points]

- **The Senate should pass a new COVID relief bill including testing, treatment, and economic aid for immigrant families who were excluded in past relief bills, like in the House HEROES Act.** Doing so will help the entire community where they reside.
 - **The Department of Homeland Security's immigration agencies need to be transformed** into reputable, non-politicized organizations which efficiently, professionally, and humanely implement reasonable immigration and customs policies. ICE and CBP should be agencies that prioritize effective alternatives to detention. They should stop separating children from their families, delaying access to asylum-consideration, and detaining people for migration-related offenses.
 - **DHS must not reprogram funds from other agencies to ICE/CBP for enforcement.** DHS has recently demonstrated a stronger need for Congressional oversight, more transparency, and better responsiveness to correct abuses. The DHS FY21 appropriations should include such provisions.
 - **We deserve federal programs applied in the field that do not diminish basic human dignity.** Americans are better than that, and our government should be also. We should treat immigrants with compassion and dignity, as to honor our faith traditions of welcoming the stranger.
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Sample Hand Written Letter to Your Senators

[Use your own words. Speak from your heart -- this is only a sample letter.]

[Today's date]

Dear Senator _____, *[write to both of your US Senators.]*

I am a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]*, and supporter of the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice. Guided by my faith, I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all people and that no human being is illegal. I urge you to provide immigrants access to aid in the next COVID relief bill and to strengthen oversight of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ensuring its agencies treat immigrants humanely.

[Insert personal experience or pick one talking point in your own words, to support the main message.]

I care deeply about these issues. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection must have better oversight. We should not be a country that persecutes people legitimately seeking asylum and other legal pathways to residency and citizenship. Nor should we be a country which cruelly excludes hard-working families in frontline jobs from access to health testing and treatment and stimulus payments simply because of their citizenship status.

[Adapt a closing such as...] Thank you for your consideration of my *[concerns/story]*. I look forward to your response. etc.)

Sincerely, *[YOUR NAME and COMPLETE ADDRESS must be Included to be counted - proves that you are a constituent. And include your EMAIL optional-some offices like to respond by email.]*

(See other side for Why We Are Writing, Background, UU Grounding, Message and ASK)