

Immigration Reform and Gay Rights

Michael Sean Winters | Apr. 30, 2010 NCR Today

Cathy Grossman over at USAToday has [a post up](#) [1] about the letter from Bishop Wester, chair of the USCCB Committee on Migration, that offered conditional support for the "framework" for immigration reform legislation, presented yesterday by Sen. Harry Reid. She called me for comment, which I did, but I want to elaborate.

A couple of things are striking here. First, the "framework" emerged almost overnight. It appears to have been devised not so much as an authoritative first draft of comprehensive legislation but as an effort to reap the Arizona press whirlwind. Second, the quickness of Wester's response shows how seriously the USCCB takes the issue of immigration reform. Third, as Grossman points out, there is the issue of how to treat same-sex couples under the immigration law.

Comprehensive immigration reform should not be the vehicle to ground the federal government's recognition of same sex unions. It seems to me that the whole point of the gay marriage movement is to insist that gays and lesbians deserve to walk in the front door, and sneaking such recognition into a bill on immigration contradicts that central goal, no? More importantly, like it or not, the country as a whole is not ready for gay marriage even though some states are, and many young people yawn when you bring the subject up. I think it would be criminal to risk comprehensive immigration reform over an issue that has such an obvious expiration date on it as opposition to gay marriage.

But, Grossman is right to note that Bishop Wester's devoting a whole paragraph of a short letter to what might be a throwaway line in a legislative proposal, one not even rendered in precise legislative language yet, betrays a prickliness that ill suits the bishops. Maybe some of them still feel bruised over the health care debate. Some, undoubtedly, have drunk their own Kool-Aid and seem to simply hate the President no matter what he does. The truth is they have no one to blame but themselves for being sidelined during the final negotiations over health care and if they achieve the same result on health care, it will be another sad day for an American hierarchy.

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