



# CONGREGATION MICAH

Do justly, love mercy,  
walk humbly with  
thy God.

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Ron Galbraith  
President

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Laurie Rice  
Rabbi

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Philip "Flip" Rice  
Rabbi

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Todd Evans  
Executive Director

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Julie Greenberg  
Education Director

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Lisa Silver  
Music Director

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June 22, 2010

The Honorable Phil Bredesen  
Governor of Tennessee  
Tennessee State Capitol  
Nashville, TN, 37243-0001

Dear Governor Bredesen:

We at Congregation Micah and the larger Jewish community of Nashville value your leadership of our great state of Tennessee. We consider you a true champion of public policy in many areas. As you continue to address the many questions and challenges facing our society, we feel it necessary to voice our opinion on behalf of the community we serve regarding the subject of immigration. Our experiences through history teach that as Jews we are compelled to raise our voices on behalf of those who are marginalized, whose God-given rights are not respected. The ramifications of this most recent piece of legislation, SB 1141/HB670, are far from the values espoused by our community or tradition.

Our sacred scriptures mince no words. Thirty six times in the Bible we read about protection – not from the stranger – but rather, for the stranger. “When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Leviticus 19:33-34) So immigration is a passionate issue for us Jews. In addition, Abraham was the first Jewish immigrant. He went from his homeland to the land of Canaan, and from there to Egypt and then back to Canaan. Joseph and his brothers ended up in Egypt again because in Canaan life was tough. In Egypt there was food, employment, a livelihood. Thousands of years later our people were forced to immigrate, to leave our holy land. Our diaspora forced us to move from nation to nation. 350 years ago the first Jewish immigrants arrived in America. Initially these 23 Jews faced hostility and deportation, now we value and are valued by American society. Knowing the heart of the immigrant, therefore, affects our vision for public policy.

**A Reform Jewish Synagogue**

Member, Union for Reform Judaism

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To be clear, Judaism does not condone unlawful entry or circumventions of our nation's immigration laws. We certainly support the right of our government to enforce the law and protect the national security interests of the United States, which is why the laws are so important. When our country curtailed immigration in the past its laws had devastating effects upon us; we suffered terribly during the *Shoah*, the Holocaust, when immigration laws and quotas were upheld.

The measure of a society is in how it takes care of those who are in need. We are surrounded by people in need who deserve a fair and human response, not more obstacles to the freedoms we enjoy. So we appeal to you to be a leader and teacher and to save the legislative process by vetoing this attempt to "place a stumbling block before the blind."

Thank you,

  
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