

# NETWORK NEWS



## COMPROMISED IMMIGRATION REFORM: WHY I CAN'T SUPPORT S. 744

by Karma R. Chávez, WNPJ Board Member

Local immigrant rights and justice organizations, coordinated through the Wisconsin Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (WNIRR, of which WNPJ is a member), have largely decided to support S.744, the “Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act,” which was passed by the U.S. Senate in June.

The coordinated effort that Voces de la Frontera and WNIRR have put into contacting elected officials and organizing local allies is laudable. Prior to the release of the first version of the Senate’s bill, I was a part of those efforts. But not all immigrant rights and justice activists are offering their support. The

Union de Trabajadores Inmigrantes (UTI) in Madison will not support a bill that criminalizes more undocumented people and will lead to more deportations. UTI’s Alex Gillis suggests that real immigration reform must address free trade agreements and the global economic situation. On the UTI Facebook page, Gillis questioned whether groups should advocate against the bad parts while pushing for something better, or take a “wait and see” approach to see how the process unfolds in the House of Representatives. These are difficult questions. There is important reason for those of us like me, U.S. citizens not living on the U.S.-Mexico border, to think carefully through them.

I have had difficulty actively opposing this bill given that I am a U.S. citizen, when some immigrants, with whom I consider myself an ally, support it. Why do they support it? This bill provides a pathway to citizenship for an estimated seven million of the 11 million undocumented people living in the United States. Some would be eligible for what is called “Registered Provisional Immigrant” (RPI) status. Young people who qualify for the DREAM Act, and some agricultural workers, will be able to access a somewhat accelerated pathway toward citizenship (at least 5-10 years after applying for RPI status). These two groups

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## THE ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP OF WISCONSIN

By Huda Alkaff



The Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin, a state-wide volunteer group formed in 2005, intends to educate its members, the Muslim community and the general public about the Islamic environmental teachings, to apply these teachings in daily life, and to form coalitions with others working toward a just, peaceful and sustainable future. Its primary two Islamic sources are the Qur'an (the holy book for Muslims) and the Hadith (Reports on the sayings and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad –peace be upon him).

We organize environmental workshops for Muslim families, households and individuals. Participants learn and explore ways to apply the Islamic environmental and stewardship teachings in their daily lives, reduce waste, conserve energy and water, eat healthier foods, and

together build a stronger sense of community. We have activities throughout the year, designating a theme for each month: January is Networking; February Global Warming/Climate Change; March Water; April Wisconsin Interfaith Earth Month; May Certified Organic Fair Trade; June through August Community Vegetable Garden, as well as Green Ramadan; September Peace;

October Wisconsin Interfaith Energy Awareness Month; November Recycling; and December Environmental Justice.

IEG collaborates with Wisconsin Interfaith Power and Light on the Interfaith TelePrayer for Earth / Climate Change (the fifth Interfaith TelePrayer took place on July 29, 2013); Preach-In on Climate Change (February-April); Interfaith Earth Month Poster Contest; (April in which more than 650 K-12 students have participated since 2005); and Interfaith Energy Awareness Month (October). Since 2007 we have prevented 1,468,962 pounds (734 tons) of greenhouse gas emissions. Our main activity has been: “Combating Global Warming and Poverty by Distributing Free Energy Star LED Lights to the Poor and Needy.”

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## WNPJ Membership Renewal Form

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Send completed form to: **Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice**  
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Phone 608-250-9240; E-Mail [diane@wnpj.org](mailto:diane@wnpj.org); Website [www.wnpj.org](http://www.wnpj.org). WNPJ is a 501(c)3 organization and donations are tax-deductible.

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\* You can become a sustaining monthly donor by signing up online at [www.wnpj.org/Donate-Join](http://www.wnpj.org/Donate-Join).

### IEG from front page

Recycling Month in November is one of our popular programs. Since 2008, the Muslim community has recycled more than 4,000 plastic shopping and grocery bags and over 2,000 newspapers and office paper! IEG distributed hundreds of reusable shopping bags made of recycled and recyclable materials, hundreds of pencils made of recycled newspaper, and hundreds of pens made of recycled plastic bottles to the community.

Another successful activity is the community vegetable gardens at different locations and in collaboration with several Mosques in Wisconsin. A large amount of fresh produce is donated to the local food pantries.

In the Qur'an (2:183), God says, "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) God-consciousness (Taqwa)." As this is written (in July), Muslims are celebrating Ramadan, the holy month of fasting, during which Muslims who are able abstain from food and drink (including water) from dawn till sunset. The main purpose of the fasting is to become more aware of and sensitive to the plight of the poor, hungry and thirsty. Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an, the holy book for Muslims, was revealed to Prophet Mohamed (PBUH). It is a month of reflection, contemplation, repentance, renewal, spiritual purification and rejuvenation.

In July 2013, IEG organized two community conversation events: "Communities of Peace, Justice and Sustainability" with the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice's outreach team. The first was held at the Urban Ecology Center-Riverside Park in Milwaukee in collaboration with the Interfaith Earth Network, and the second at the Islamic Society of Milwaukee. Both events were part of "Power Down" and "Green Ramadan."

We consider environmental justice, the right for clean air, pure water, healthy food, good sanitation, etc., as a human rights issue. Our major goal is to work with others to make environmental justice a reality for all.

Justice is the basis of all human relations and a foundation of Islamic rule. There is one word that captures the essence of all Islamic laws and all Islamic teachings; one word that describes the overriding value that permeates all Islamic values - **Justice**. God says in the Qur'an (57:25): "We sent aforetime our messengers with clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that humans may stand forth in Justice."

In the Qur'an (15:19), God says, "And the earth we have spread out; set thereon mountains firm and immovable; and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance." In the Qur'an (55:7-9), "...and God has set up the Balance (of Justice), in order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice

and fall not short in the balance." And another verse from the Qur'an (3:108), "These are the Signs of God: We rehearse them to thee in Truth: And God means no injustice to **any** of His creatures."

Ramadan is a powerful, transformative experience. During the holy month of Ramadan, we can transform our lives and move away from a consumption-focused life to a life of moderation. It is the time to reflect on our wants and what we really need to live a peaceful, simple life on this earth.

I pray that we reduce our ecological footprint and use Ramadan's spiritual experience as an opportunity to reflect on our own lives and move away from materialistic culture and the waste it leaves behind. It is the ideal time to put into practice the Islamic environmental teachings to care for Earth and all its inhabitants and to stand up for environmental justice, climate justice, clean air, clean water, healthy food, and sanitation for all as a basic human rights and creation rights issue. Help us, God, to do good work to keep Earth balanced, just, peaceful and sustainable for all. Amen.

*Huda Alkaff is the Founder and Director of the Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin, [islamicenvironmentalgroup.org](http://islamicenvironmentalgroup.org), and President of Wisconsin Interfaith Power & Light, [wisconsinipl.org](http://wisconsinipl.org), and Vice Chair of the Interfaith Earth Network, a program of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee.*