

Baptists support legalization but not `amnesty'

by [Adelle M. Banks](#)

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(RNS) Southern Baptists adopted a resolution Wednesday (June 15) that supports a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants but clearly states they reject "amnesty."

After heated debate at their annual meeting in Phoenix, the Baptists approved a statement that called for secure borders and "a just and compassionate path to legal status, with appropriate restitutionary measures" for illegal immigrants already in the U.S.

Some delegates said the language on "legal status" was tantamount to amnesty, prompting an almost equally divided vote over whether to remove it. In response, officials added language that said: "This resolution is not to be construed as support for amnesty for any undocumented immigrant."

After Tuesday's election that put an African-American pastor in the denomination's No. 2 leadership position, and plans to increase ethnic diversity, the resolution emphasized the church should minister regardless of a person's immigration status or country of origin.

"The intention ... is to point us all toward thinking about those who have come into the United States from other nations," said Paul Jimenez, a South Carolina pastor and chair of the resolutions committee. "To ask the question first, not `What is your legal status?', but `What is your gospel status?'"

In a separate and unexpected vote, delegates expressed "profound disappointment" with the 2011 translation of the popular New International Version of the Bible, saying its use of gender-neutral

language has made it an "inaccurate translation of God's inspired Scripture."

The meeting was attended by 4,814 registrants, the lowest number since 1944.