

NEW JERSEY

# Prayer vigil, walk spotlight 25 years of North Jersey immigrant advocacy group



**Ricardo Kaulesar**

NorthJersey.com

Updated Oct. 6, 2025, 7:25 p.m. ET



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## Key Points

- Around 50 people from various organizations participated in the nearly 16-mile walk, which started at the Wind of the Spirit faith-based group's headquarters in Madison, NJ.
  - The walk ended in Newark with a prayer vigil to highlight federal immigration policies.
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The Morris County faith-based group Wind of the Spirit marked 25 years of immigrant advocacy work on Oct. 6 with a 25-kilometer (15.6-mile) walk that ended in Newark with a prayer vigil to highlight federal immigration policies.

Around 50 people from various organizations participated in the walk, which started at the group's headquarters in Madison in the early morning. They made stops in Maplewood and Summit before ending in front of the Peter Rodino Federal Building on Broad Street in downtown Newark for the vigil. The Rev. Charles Loflin of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Montclair led a prayer for those who had gathered.

Since 2000, the [nonprofit](#) has focused on educating, organizing and mobilizing immigrant communities to fight for their rights and for humane immigration policies.

Adam McGovern, legislative strategist at Wind of the Spirit, told NorthJersey.com before the walk that it was "a fitting way to commemorate our 25 years of advocating for equal respect and shared human rights."



18 Photos

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## Nonprofit that mobilizes immigrant communities to fight for their rights marks 25 years

The group Wind of the Spirit's 25 years of immigrant advocacy was noted with a walk and vigil on Oct. 6 that started in Madison and ended in Newark.

"A 25k walk matches the 25 years, enacts the journey that many brave immigrants undertake to reach a better life, and symbolizes the march forward to a more fair society that all of us still need to complete," McGovern said.



The Morris County faith-based group Wind of the Spirit marked 25 years of immigrant advocacy work with a 25-kilometer (15.6-mile) walk that ended in Newark on Oct. 6. *Ricardo Kaulessar/NorthJersey.com*

One of the participants, Dover resident Karol Ruiz, came to the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant from Colombia at the age of 7. Forty years later, Ruiz is an attorney. She said that happened in part because Wind of the Spirit and other organizations fought for undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition and get drivers' licenses. "What I am looking for people to see is how life-changing it is to be in community, to be in solidarity," Ruiz said.

McGovern said the vigil was outside the federal building, which houses offices of both U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, to spotlight the actions of those agencies since President Donald Trump implemented [restrictive immigration policies](#) after taking office in January. During that time, ICE officers have been carrying out aggressive immigration enforcement and cracking down on protesters. There also has been intense vetting of immigrants through USCIS, including a [required \\$100,000 fee](#) for H-1B visa petitions.

"Our nation of immigrants is being set on the wrong course by unfit leaders attacking their own population, and we have to demonstrate that we, the people, stand for something more sane and humane," McGovern said.



Participants in the vigil for human rights sing outside the Peter Rodino Federal Building, Oct 6, 2025, Newark, NJ, United States. *Yannick Peterhans, Yannick Peterhans/NorthJersey.com*

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He also hoped the walk and vigil would accomplish several things. One is to bring greater solidarity among immigrant advocacy groups. Another is to focus attention on the Immigrant Trust Act, [still pending](#) in the New Jersey Legislature, which would limit state and local agencies from sharing personal information with ICE or assisting federal officers in the field when they are enforcing civil warrants.

Rosanna Rodriguez, who came from the Dominican Republic 15 years ago, is the co-executive director of the Laundry Workers Center, an advocacy group in Orange for low-wage laundry workers.

Rodriguez, 38, said she was “tired and excited” from this new experience of the long walk, but did it because of the respect she has for the work by Wind of the Spirit in advocating for immigrants' rights. “I think human rights are important, and we can do things in a peaceful way,” Rodriguez said.

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