

# Comprehensive Immigration Reform

## Six guiding principles for fixing our broken immigration system.

- 1) **Providing a clear and earned path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.** For the 12 million undocumented immigrants, including 2 million undocumented children, living in this country we must create a process that leads to lawful permanent resident status and eventual citizenship. Undocumented immigrants working and living in the U.S. must be counted through a registration program that includes reasonable submission to background checks, paying an appropriate fine, paying taxes and studying English. If they satisfy these requirements, they must be given lawful permanent status and a path to citizenship.
- 2) **Clearing immigration backlogs, so that millions of family members who have filed legal applications can be processed and reunited.** Our outdated family immigration channels, which keep close family members separated for decades, must be reformed to restore our commitment to promoting family unity. Those stuck in endless “backlogs” should have their admission expedited, and those admitted on work visas should be able to keep their nuclear families intact.
- 3) **Ensure appropriate ways for workers to come in legally in the future with full worker rights and labor protections.** A great failure of our current employment-based immigration system is that the level of legal immigration is set arbitrarily by Congress without regard to real labor market needs. The resulting extra-legal migration channels have created a shadow economy that has allowed unscrupulous employers to manipulate the system to the detriment of workers and reputable employers alike. Any reform package must allocate employment visas through an independent commission that can assess labor shortages and determine the number and characteristics of foreign workers to be admitted, with Congress’ approval. Additionally, we must protect the rights of future flows of workers to organize and bargain collectively, regardless of whether they were born in the U.S. or abroad.
- 4) **Ensure due process and fundamental rights for all.** The Constitution guarantees due process for all people in this country. Our government, however, has not fulfilled that guarantee in its treatment of immigrants. Congress must restore basic civil liberties for all individuals in this country and renew our commitment to core American values of fairness and justice. Our immigration enforcement system must reflect the American values of due process and civil rights for all people. Enforcement must target genuine threats to our national security and all enforcement actions must be subject to accountability mechanisms. Alternatives

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to detention should be considered and special protections provided for vulnerable populations. Detention should be a last resort and there must be legally enforceable detention standards.

- 5) **Promote immigrant integration.** The federal government must help new immigrants become citizens if eligible, learn our language and laws, ensure equal opportunity for immigrants to participate in programs and services and support state and local governments' efforts to help integrate these new Americans.
  
- 6) **Enhance our nation's security and safety with a sensible enforcement policy.** We must ensure there is a sensible enforcement strategy that keeps America safe, protects due process and human rights, and makes the most effective use of tools and policies already available in a fair and responsible manner. This means prioritizing enforcement actions to genuine threats; prosecution of unscrupulous employers who are exploiting vulnerable workers; and preventing exploitation of the immigration system by those who seek to do the country harm. This strategy, however, must be coupled with vigorous enforcement of civil rights and labor and employment laws. An effective strategy must not include continued use of local law enforcement agencies to enforce federal immigration law, indiscriminate worksite and neighborhood immigration raids, and blanket detention policies. Border enforcement must reflect American values, prioritizing the safety and security of border communities and consulting with these communities in the process.

#### **About OneAmerica**

OneAmerica advances the fundamental principles of democracy and justice at the local, state and national levels by building power within immigrant communities in collaboration with key allies.

For More Information about OneAmerica, visit:

[www.weareoneamerica.org](http://www.weareoneamerica.org)

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