

Principles for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

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Fix our immigration laws now

- **America is a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws.** Current policies fail on both counts. It is time to reform our laws so that these traditions are strengthened.
- **The status quo is broken.** Current immigration policies leave millions of workers in the shadows, vulnerable to abuse because they lack legal documentation, and unable to fully participate in a country they have helped to build. The mismatch between outdated policies and the economic realities of our country has led to a ballooning unauthorized immigrant population and thousands of deaths at the border.
- **We need a new approach to managing migration.** We can regulate immigration properly if we legalize hardworking, taxpaying immigrants, welcome workers and families in the future within limits, set those limits so that they are realistic and enforceable. We need a “smart border” strategy that screens and inspects people and cargo to keep out security threat, while admitting immigrants and goods that strengthen our nation. Such a strategy will make immigration safe, orderly, and legal instead of deadly, chaotic, and operating outside the bounds of the law.

The solution: a comprehensive approach that makes immigration sense for America and its newcomers

- **Work permits and a path to citizenship for those here and contributing.** As part of a comprehensive reform, we should recognize and reward the hard work of immigrants living in the United States who are kept in legal limbo by restrictive immigration policies. Legalization of the current undocumented population would benefit both hardworking immigrants and their families *and* established workers and employers, by providing immigrant workers with the same labor protections as their native-born co-workers and stabilizing our labor force.
- **Expanded family and worker visas.** Immigration reform will not be successful until we harmonize public policy with the factors that drive migration: family unity and economic opportunity. A comprehensive reform will create legal channels wide enough so that family members and workers opt for a legal alternative to entering the United States. We need to restructure our family preference system so that newcomers aren't forced to choose between long separations from their American families or seeking entry without authorization. With respect to worker visas, we need a “break-the-mold” program that provides legal visas, family unity, full labor rights, labor mobility, and a path to permanent residence and citizenship over time.
- **Smart enforcement.** To better enforce immigration laws, we have to make them enforceable. By legalizing those here and legalizing much of the future flow, we will go a long way to restoring the rule of law. However, open borders is neither practical nor desirable. To augment wider legal channels, effective enforcement requires a smart borders regime that screens those who enter efficiently, cracks down on human traffickers, polices the border with professionalism and accountability, imposes penalties in a targeted fashion on unscrupulous employers who exploit workers and undermine law-abiding competitors. It's the federal government's responsibility to carry out enforcement and to that end we need to build a fully funded and well- resourced federal immigration infrastructure capable of carrying out the related duties of facilitating admissions and regulating the process in an even-handed and effective manner.
- **Integrate immigrants fully into American society.** Immigrants are more than workers. They are neighbors, fellow members of our society, and an essential part of America's future. Working with immigrant and ethnic communities, our country needs better strategies and policies to encourage immigrants to learn English, become citizens, participate in the civic life of communities as well as have equitable access to essential services.