



## Three Key Requirements for Immigration Reform

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As the immigration debate commences on Capitol Hill and policymakers draft legislation, here are three key requirements we want to see in immigration reform:

- **Include a *real* road to citizenship for immigrants without papers.** Second class status is unacceptable. Since the end of slavery, America has never created a separate class of people who are blocked from becoming citizens, and we shouldn't start now. The American people overwhelmingly support citizenship over legalization without a chance to earn citizenship because citizenship comes with rights and responsibilities that make our country stronger.

When it comes to a real road to citizenship, though, the details matter. The point of immigration reform is to create a program that immigrants can reasonably complete, not a complicated, expensive, and exclusive path for which few people qualify. The new road to citizenship must:

- *Be a direct channel, without contingencies such as putting in place unrelated enforcement triggers before an immigrant can obtain a green card or citizenship;*
  - *Provide all 11 million undocumented immigrants who are here working hard and strengthening our country with a chance to earn permanent residency and citizenship;*
  - *Take place within a reasonable timeframe—immigrants rooted in this country should wait years, not decades, to obtain citizenship;*
  - *Fully integrate aspiring Americans into our societal fabric by providing them with access to affordable health care; and*
  - *Have realistic and achievable requirements, not hurdles that will be impossible for most to overcome.*
- **Don't increase heavy-handed immigration enforcement. Do reform laws and policies to achieve smarter enforcement.** The immigration debate in Congress is often dominated by discussion about the border, even though immigration enforcement is actually the *only* area Congress has addressed in recent years. Experts agree that the border is more secure than ever. We spend more tax dollars on immigration enforcement than all other federal law

enforcement agencies combined. Net unauthorized migration is at zero. The Obama Administration continues to break records on deportations, which break up families. We don't need "more" heavy-handed enforcement. We need fair immigration reform and smarter enforcement—including an end to troubling laws and policies that have eroded individuals' rights and made our communities less secure.

The new enforcement component we expect to see in forthcoming legislative proposals will be verification of legal status in the workplace. This is an enormous undertaking that raises serious concerns for immigrants and other workers. If this piece is included, lawmakers must focus on getting the details right and protecting all workers.

- **Act fast.** The Senate Judiciary Committee should start marking up legislation *early* in March. The time for action is long overdue and there is bipartisan agreement on moving forward. We agree with Chairman Leahy, President Obama, and Former Republican Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez that Congress needs to move quickly and get this done.

Congress has the best chance in years to enact fair accountable immigration reform in 2013, proving to the country our elected officials can actually work together to resolve important issues in a fair and lasting way. But, they need to pass an immigration law that is workable, fair, and a complete solution—rooted in facts, not fears. They must act now.