

# Talking Points and Messaging for National Day of Action Meetings

**AMERICA NEEDS SOLUTIONS.** AILA calls upon our nation's leaders to push for real solutions—not band-aids or slogans—to fix our immigration system. AILA's reform framework, drawn from our experience representing clients in every facet of immigration law, consists of the following:

1. Require all undocumented immigrants to register with the government and earn permanent legal status by paying stiff fines and back taxes, undergoing rigorous background checks, and learning English
2. Provide fair and lawful ways for American businesses to hire much-needed immigrant workers while protecting U.S. workers from unfair competition and all workers from exploitation
3. Reduce the counterproductive backlogs in family-based and employment-based immigration
4. Ensure the immigration system provides adequate visas to meet the future needs of American families, businesses, and communities
5. Preserve and restore the fundamental principles of due process and equal protection while protecting our national security

## **IMMIGRATION REFORM IS GOOD FOR AMERICAN BUSINESSES, WORKERS.**

- With the U.S. economy still recovering and jobs scarce, all of America is thinking about how best to create jobs and jumpstart the economic engine. Immigrants and immigrant-owned businesses are proven engines that help drive economic growth.
- America has always attracted the “best and the brightest.” Smart immigration reform can spur business innovation and economic development in regions or sectors where growth is most needed while still protecting American workers.
- “Enforcement-only” proposals do nothing to help the economy and are costly to implement. For example, expanding the E-verify program is unlikely to create jobs for the unemployed and could devastate productive businesses or entire industries.

## **WHAT'S WRONG WITH “ENFORCEMENT-ONLY”?**

- Effective border security and interior enforcement are essential to a functioning immigration system. But many members of Congress continue to offer enforcement-only proposals like mass deportations or building border fences.
- These are band-aid approaches that will not be effective until smart, practical solutions are implemented that address the millions of undocumented already in the U.S. and America's continuing need for legal immigration avenues to meet business and family needs.
- Despite aggressive enforcement by the Bush and Obama administrations that include a record-breaking 392,000 deportations last year and unprecedented spending on border security (with an extra \$600 million added last August), studies show that larger economic factors, such as the recession and job availability are what really affect rates of legal and illegal immigration.

## **EXPANDING E-VERIFY WITHOUT LEGALIZATION WOULD HURT OUR ECONOMY.**

While a functioning and efficient employment verification system is necessary to ensure workers are authorized, the current E-Verify system suffers from serious privacy, civil liberties, budgetary and technological concerns. Unless a solution is found to legalize thousands of essential workers, an expansion of E-verify would do grave harm to American jobs and the economy.

- Expanding E-verify will not create jobs and would not rid our country of the undocumented despite the claims made by restrictionists.
- Expanding E-Verify would drive thousands into an underground economy and undermine business growth. A mandatory E-verify program would cost \$23 billion in program costs and lost tax revenues over a decade.
- A Bloomberg report estimated that a mandatory E-verify would cost small businesses \$2.6 billion.
- Industries that depend on unauthorized workers, such as farming, would be decimated if E-verify became mandatory

**CONGRESS MUST PROTECT AND RESTORE DUE PROCESS AND FAIRNESS.** Current reactionary laws against immigrants go too far and deny basic due process and fairness to millions of people who live in the U.S. When our immigration system fails to reflect core values of fairness and transparency, it undermines basic American principles and values.

- The immigration court system should be restored to ensure everyone a fair day in court.
- Immigration detention has become the default practice resulting in the skyrocketing use of detention in poor conditions for hundreds of thousands of people.
- AILA opposes proposals that add stiff penalties for those who violate immigration laws and immigrants who commit even minor criminal offenses. These kinds of “get-tough” measures are punitive and disproportionate to the offending behavior.
- Congress should guarantee the right to counsel for those in removal proceedings and protect the public from the unlicensed practice of immigration law.

## **FAMILIES CANNOT BE COMPROMISED.**

- Congress needs to build upon family strengths to ensure that future generations of immigrants continue to fulfill their extraordinary potential for success. With the economy like it is today, we need more immigrants who can be committed to their new country, work hard, play by the rules, start businesses and pay taxes.
- The immigrant visa system should be reformed to ensure adequate family visas are available and to eliminate backlogs that keep families waiting years to reunify.
- Restricting family immigration would be a dramatic and unwise shift in American immigration policy. AILA opposes proposals to reduce or eliminate the family-based immigration system or to convert to a point-based system.

**ATTACKS ON THE 14TH AMENDMENT.** At both the federal and state levels, the repugnant idea of eliminating automatic citizenship for children born on U.S. soil has gained renewed attention. Legislators have proposed amending the 14th Amendment or redefining it to prevent the children of undocumented parents from receiving citizenship. AILA opposes these proposals as attacks on civil rights and the Constitution.

**STATE AND LOCAL ENFORCEMENT OF IMMIGRATION LAWS.** AILA opposes the proliferation of enforcement laws at the state and local levels, like Arizona's SB 1070, that require local law enforcement agencies to enforce immigration law. Immigration law should remain a federal matter. AILA also opposes federal laws, like the CLEAR Act, that grant states and localities so-called "inherent authority" to police immigration. Such laws compromise the effectiveness of local policing and undermine community safety.