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**The White House**

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

May 03, 2011

**Readout of the President's Meeting with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus on Fixing the Broken Immigration System**

In a meeting in the State Dining Room today, the President and Senior Administration officials met with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to discuss the importance of fixing the broken immigration system so that it meets our nation's 21st century economic and security needs.

The President thanked the CHC members for joining him in a strong effort to pass the DREAM Act during the lame-duck session last year, and reiterated his disappointment that it failed to pass in the Senate after passing with bipartisan votes in the House. The President also noted his deep disappointment that Congressional action on immigration reform has stalled.

The President was asked by the CHC members to consider a broad range of administrative options. The President articulated that his goal is to reform the law, and that he cannot do this unilaterally, noting that the only way to fix what's broken about our immigration system is through legislative action in Congress. However, the President agreed to carefully review the CHC members' request.

The President detailed how the Administration continues to improve our legal immigration system, secure our borders, and enhance our immigration enforcement. He noted that his Administration will continue to work toward improving our enforcement practices so that we are not using our limited resources on those potentially eligible for an adjustment of status, but rather tightening our efforts so that the Department of Homeland Security more effectively and sensibly focuses on criminals, a smart approach from a law enforcement perspective.

The President updated the CHC members on the meetings he has held in recent weeks with stakeholders from a broad range of sectors and from both parties on the need to elevate the debate on immigration and get past the false debates and rhetoric that have dominated the issue. The President reaffirmed that he will continue to work to forge bipartisan consensus and will intensify efforts to lead a civil debate on this issue in the coming weeks and months. The President and the CHC members agreed that they share the same goal of fixing the broken immigration system through legislative action, and that it is in the best interests of our nation's economic and security needs to do so at the earliest possible opportunity.

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### **Background on the President's Meeting with Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Today**

Today the President and Senior Administration Officials will meet with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to discuss the importance of fixing the broken immigration system for our nation's 21st century economic and security needs so that America can win the future. The President will also discuss how we can work together to foster a constructive national conversation on this important issue as we work to build a bipartisan consensus in Congress.

#### **Administration officials expected to attend the meeting include:**

Bill Daley, Chief of Staff  
Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor  
Melody Barnes, Director, Domestic Policy Council  
Rob Nabors, Director, Legislative Affairs  
Cecilia Muñoz, Director, Intergovernmental Affairs  
Mark Zuckerman, Deputy Director, Domestic Policy Council  
Alejandro Pérez, Special Assistant to the President, Legislative Affairs  
Louisa Terrell, Special Assistant to the President, Legislative Affairs  
Felicia Escobar, Senior Policy Advisor, Domestic Policy Council

#### **CHC members expected at the meeting include:**

Rep. Charles A. Gonzalez (D-TX), Chair  
Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX), 1st Vice Chair  
Rep. Ben R. Luján (D-NM), 2nd Vice Chair  
Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA), Whip  
Rep. Joe Baca (D-CA)  
Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA)  
Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA)  
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ)  
Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez (D-IL)  
Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NY)  
Rep. Grace Flores Napolitano (D-CA)  
Rep. Ed Pastor (D-AZ)  
Rep. Pedro Pierluisi (D-PR)  
Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)  
Rep. Gregorio Sablán (D-NM)  
Rep. José E. Serrano (D-NY)  
Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY)

#### **Background on Administration Immigration Policy**

President Obama remains deeply committed to fixing the broken immigration system. The United States has been enriched by a steady stream of hardworking and talented people who have helped make America an engine of the global economy and a beacon of hope around the world. As we work to rebuild the economy, our ability to thrive

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depends, in part, on restoring responsibility and accountability to the immigration system. President Obama believes Democrats and Republicans should come together to tackle an issue that is critical not only to our national security but also to the economy and our global competitiveness.

The President has outlined a vision for fixing the broken immigration system through common-sense, comprehensive immigration reform grounded in the principles of responsibility and accountability:

- **Responsibility from the federal government to secure our borders:** Today, our borders are more secure than at any time in the past several decades. However, the Administration continues to refine and strengthen its strategy. Enforcement resources should be increased where appropriate and focused on stopping potential terrorists and others who would do our nation harm.
- **Accountability for businesses that break the law by undermining American workers and exploiting undocumented workers:** Employers that break the law by deliberately hiring and exploiting undocumented workers must be held accountable. At the same time, we must give employers who want to play by the rules a reliable way to verify that their employees are here legally.
- **Responsibility from people who are living in the United States illegally:** Those people living here illegally must also be held accountable for getting on the right side of the law, by admitting they broke the law, paying taxes and a penalty, learning English before they can get in line to become legalized and citizens. Being a citizen of this country comes not only with rights but also with fundamental responsibilities. We can create a pathway for legal status that is fair, and reflects of our values.
- **Strengthen economic competitiveness by creating a legal immigration system that meets our diverse needs:** Our immigration laws should encourage high-skilled individuals we train in our world-class institutions of higher education to stay in the United States and create jobs, stop punishing innocent young people for their parents' actions by denying children the chance to earn an education or join the military so they can earn higher wages and generate more tax revenues, provide farmers a legal way to hire the workers they rely on, and should respect families following the rules.

The President takes seriously his responsibility to enforce our immigration laws and secure the border. Over the last two years, the Obama Administration has dedicated unprecedented resources to secure the border, taken important steps to make interior and worksite enforcement of our immigration laws smarter, and more effective, and made improvements to the legal immigration system.

- **Dedicating Unprecedented Resources to Secure the Border:** Today, there are more "boots on the ground" along the Southwest Border than ever before. DHS has also deployed thousands of technology assets, including aircraft and Unmanned Aircraft Systems, and completed nearly all fencing. Last year, Congress answered the President's call to bolster the federal government's efforts through the Southwest Border Security Supplemental Bill. DHS is using these resources to build on their successful efforts to decrease the numbers of illegal aliens who cross the border and increase seizures of illegal currency, drugs, and guns that have led to thousands of criminal arrests and prosecutions.
- **Making our Interior and Worksite Enforcement Efforts Smarter and More Strategic:** The Administration has laid out new enforcement strategies targeted at removing immigrants convicted of serious crimes and unscrupulous employers who seek to exploit both immigrant and American workers. These new strategies are having real results with deportations of criminal immigrants significantly increasing and auditing and fines against employers who are not in compliance with immigration laws in FY 2010. DHS has also invested in implementing important reforms to the detention system, enhancing the security and efficiency of the detention system while prioritizing the health and safety of detainees.
- **Improving our Legal Immigration System:** The Administration is improving processing times and clearing backlogs of pending immigration applications, including fully eliminating the FBI National Name Check Program's backlog. DHS is also working to ensure that naturalization is accessible to all qualified legal immigrants. Since January 2009, DHS has worked with the Armed Forces to naturalize 14,000 military personnel. DHS is also devoting critical funding to support citizenship preparation and integration programs in communities throughout the country.

Our efforts have been enormously successful, but we need comprehensive reform that demands responsibility and accountability from the government, businesses, and immigrants themselves.

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