

American Immigration Lawyers Association

Press Release

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Contact:

Julia Hendrix
(202) 216-2404
jhendrix@aila.org

IT IS TIME TO REFORM OUR IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

Statement of the American Immigration Lawyers Association

Washington, DC – During the State of the Union Address on February 2, President Bush reiterated his support for reforming our broken immigration system. The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) welcomes the President’s attention to this important issue and strongly agrees with him that “America’s immigration system is . . . outdated -- unsuited to the needs of our economy and to the values of our country.” Our current immigration laws do not make sense, do not make us safer, do not support the economy, do not reflect our tradition as a nation of immigrants, and need to be fixed, not decades from now, but today.

While President Bush’s comments were focused on a guest worker program, we look forward to working with him on a solution that would address our current system’s major problems. Such a comprehensive solution would:

- **Create a “break-the-mold” worker program:** Current immigration laws meet the needs of neither our economy nor workers. A “break-the-mold” program would provide visas, family unity, full labor rights, labor mobility and a path to permanent residence and citizenship over time for those who so choose and who would not displace American workers. It also would diminish significantly illegal immigration by creating a legal avenue for people to enter the U.S. and return, as many wish, to their countries, communities, and families.
- **Address the situation of people living and working in the United States:** Undocumented people with a demonstrated commitment to the U.S. as evidenced by working hard, paying taxes, and contributing to their communities, should be given the opportunity to obtain permanent residence and get on the citizenship path. Many have made the U.S their home, are paying taxes, raising families (typically including U.S. citizen and lawful permanent resident spouses and children), and contributing to their communities and the industries in which they work.
- **Reunify families:** Our current system has not been updated in a decade. Legal permanent residents often wait up to 20 years to reunite with their spouses and children. Such long separations not only make no sense in this pro-family nation, but reflect poorly on our nation.

Our current immigration system is unworkable, outdated, and in disarray. In a debate too easily filled with fear and threats, it is time for serious solutions to this serious challenge. We need a secure and controlled immigration system that will help keep us safe and fulfill the promise of liberty and opportunity that America represents.

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Founded in 1946, AILA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides its Members with continuing legal education, information, and professional services. AILA advocates before Congress and the Administration and provides liaison with the DHS and other government agencies. AILA is an Affiliated Organization of the American Bar Association.

American Immigration Lawyers Association
918 F Street NW, Washington, DC, 20004-1400
Phone (202) 216-2400; Fax (202) 783-7853 www.aila.org