

President Obama's Plan to Win the Future by Fixing Our Broken Immigration System

In his State of the Union Address, President Obama repeated his deep commitment to fixing our broken immigration system. The United States has been enriched by a steady stream of hardworking and talented people from all over the world. These generations of immigrants have helped make America the engine of the global economy and a beacon of hope around the world. As we work to rebuild the economy, our ability to win the future depends, in part, on restoring responsibility and accountability to the immigration system. The American people expect Democrats and Republicans to come together to tackle the major issues confronting our nation, and fixing our broken immigration system is critical to the economy, our global competitiveness, and our national security.

- **Secure our borders:** This Administration has dedicated record levels of resources to border security, including enforcement personnel and technology. President Obama supports investing strategic resources to further secure our borders.
- **Hold accountable businesses that break the law by exploiting undocumented laborers and undermining American workers:** This Administration will build on its current efforts to crack down on employers that deliberately hire and exploit undocumented workers. At the same time, the President believes we must make it easier for the vast majority of employers who want to play by the rules to verify their workers are here legally.
- **Demand responsibility from those living in the United States illegally:** Immigrants who are here illegally must take responsibility for their actions. To get on the right side of the law, they must own up to their illegal actions by paying taxes and an additional penalty, and learn English.
- **Create a legal immigration system that meets our diverse needs:** We must create a legal immigration system that meets our diverse economic needs and honors our rich tradition as both a nation of entrepreneurial immigrants and a nation of laws.

The President's Vision for Restoring Accountability & Responsibility to Our Immigration Laws

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:

- **Continue to make border security the responsibility and priority of the Federal Government:** Today, we are doing more to secure our borders than at any time in the past several decades. However, the Administration continues to refine and strengthen its strategy. Enforcement resources should be targeted, increased where appropriate, and focused on stopping potential terrorists and others who would do our nation harm.

- **Hold accountable businesses that break the law by exploiting undocumented workers:** Employers who break the law by deliberately hiring and exploiting undocumented workers undermine the American workforce and 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 and eligible to work.
- **Make those living in the United States illegally take responsibility for their actions:** Those people living here illegally must also be held accountable for getting on the right side of the law. To do this, they will have to admit they broke the law, pay taxes and a penalty, and learn English before they can get in line to obtain legal status and eventual citizenship. 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 reflective of our values.
- **Strengthen economic competitiveness by creating a legal immigration system that meets our diverse needs:** Our immigration laws should encourage and attract high-skilled individuals from all over the world. We must stop expelling talented and responsible young people, whether they were brought here by their parents as children, or come from other countries to pursue advanced degrees. We must also provide farmers a legal way to hire the workers they rely on, and respect families following the rules.

Building on Progress

The President takes his responsibility to enforce our immigration laws and secure the border seriously. 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. The Department of Homeland Security (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 have had real results including a 70 percent increase in deportations of criminal immigrants and, in FY 2010 more audits conducted and fines levied against employers who violated immigration laws than in any year by any previous Administration. DHS has also invested in implementing important reforms to the detention system, enhancing its security and efficiency 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 nearly 20,000 military personnel. DHS is also devoting critical funding to promote innovative citizenship preparation and integration programs in communities throughout the country.