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## The President's Blueprint for Building a 21st Century Immigration System

Posted by Melody Barnes on May 10, 2011 at 03:15 PM EDT

Editor's Note: Join the conversation to fix the immigration system for America's 21st century economy.

Today, the President travels to El Paso, Texas – a historic, thriving and diverse border community – to discuss his commitment to fixing our broken immigration system and the importance of building a new one for the 21st century. He believes we need to reform our immigration laws so that they address our economic and security needs while also honoring our history as a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws.

Over the last several weeks, the President has met with and heard from leaders and stakeholders from a variety of sectors, including faith, business and law enforcement officials, as well as current and former elected officials and others. Like many Americans, these leaders know that the generations of immigrants who have braved hardship and great risk to reach our shores have made America what it is today – a strong and prosperous nation, engine of the global economy and a beacon of hope around the world.

We have already made significant progress securing the borders, enforcing the law, and improving the legal immigration system. Over the last two years, the Obama Administration has dedicated unprecedented resources to these efforts. There are more boots on the ground on the Southwest border than at any time in our history. The buildup began under the previous administration, and has continued. We have also tripled the number of intelligence analysts, deployed unmanned aerial surveillance vehicles, and nearly completed the fence that was demanded back in 2007. These efforts have helped to make our country more secure. But we cannot solve the problems of our broken immigration system through enforcement alone.

Unscrupulous businesses have to be held accountable, and cannot continue to exploit undocumented workers, undermining American workers and those businesses who want to play by the rules. Those that are here illegally have a responsibility too. They must register and get right with the law, pay their respective taxes and fines, learn English and submit to background checks before they can get in line to apply for a legal status. Finally, we need to make changes to our immigration system so that it better meets our diverse needs.

We should be making it easier for the best and the brightest to study here, start businesses and create jobs. We should stop punishing innocent young people by denying them the chance to earn an education or serve in the military so they can contribute to the country where they've grown up. We must finish the work Congress started last year, and pass the DREAM Act. We must respect families following the rules – reuniting them instead of splitting them apart. And, we need to provide farmers a legal way to hire workers and a path for those workers to earn legal status.

The President wants to have a civil and constructive debate on this issue so that we can fix our broken immigration system. To help us reach this goal, the Obama Administration is releasing a <u>Blueprint for Building a 21st Century Immigration System</u> (pdf). The Blueprint summarizes the progress we have made in securing our borders, enforcing our laws, and improving our legal immigration system; discusses the economic benefits of immigration reform; and outlines the President's vision of a 21st century immigration policy.

Download the Blueprint (pdf).

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