

July 24, 2008

To: Republican National Committee Platform Committee  
Re: Open Letter from Immigration Leaders

To Whom It May Concern:

As leaders in the fight to restore control and order to our immigration system, we urge you to make comprehensive immigration reform a central plank of the Republican Party platform. While our country faces many policy challenges, reform of our deteriorating immigration system must be at the top of the list. In its 2008 platform, the Republican Party can show the American people that it can tackle tough challenges and propose realistic solutions by embracing common-sense immigration reform.

In recent years, many in the Republican Party have opposed comprehensive immigration reform in favor of tough rhetoric and a deportation-only policy approach. However, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, Senator John McCain, and others in the Party have recognized that unless we address the status of the 12 million undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S., we will not solve the problem. The overwhelming majority of these people are simply striving to create better lives for themselves and their families, and a strategy that focuses solely on enforcement will fail to bring them out of the shadows and restore the rule of law in our communities.

The American people are frustrated with our broken immigration system and hunger for a practical, well-organized solution. They want neither open borders, nor closed borders. They want controlled borders and a realistic policy that requires undocumented workers to come out the shadows, register with the government, pay taxes, and get on a path to U.S. citizenship. These workers should have no advantages over people who are in the U.S. legally, but they also should not be relegated to the underground economy. Americans are also frustrated by sound bite "solutions" that are designed to scare voters, not solve problems, and they are clamoring for real results.

We urge the drafting committee to join the presumptive presidential nominee, Senator John McCain, and commit to advancing a smart, practical, comprehensive, and bipartisan immigration solution that restores the rule of law and embraces our heritage as a nation of immigrants. We also urge the committee to reject the Bush Administration's current enforcement strategy, which targets immigrant workers in SWAT team-style raids of workplaces and homes, rather than prioritizing the enforcement of labor laws against employers who exploit vulnerable workers. The Administration's enforcement tactics undermine workers' rights, create a state of siege in our communities, and have no measurable impact on reducing illegal immigration.

The consequences of our failed immigration policies bleed into nearly every important domestic policy arena, from the economy to healthcare to education to border security. As we have seen over these last few years, policymakers will find it difficult to make real progress on these important issues until the status of 12 million undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S. is addressed. We need an immigration policy that serves, not subverts, our national interests, that requires these workers to come forward and get on a path to legal status, that brings our family and employment-based immigration policies into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that secures our borders, and that respects family unity, civil rights, and due process. We urge the Republican Party to adopt these principles in its 2008 platform.

Sincerely,

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