



## Immigration

**Point #1** We need comprehensive immigration reform that creates a *conditional* path to citizenship. Anything less is unfair to law-abiding Americans.

**Point #2** No one benefits from a system that rewards lawlessness and bad behavior. Immigration reform will make everyone better off.

**Point #3** Comprehensive immigration reform will improve our economy and help us control our borders. It will make us safer and honor the values of hard work and obedience to the law.

### Immigrants in U.S. Society: A Basic Picture

As of 2006, there were approximately **37.5 million foreign-born individuals** living in the United States, which represents 12.5% of the U.S. population. This number includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, undocumented migrants, and temporary migrants who consider the United States their place of residence. The number of foreign-born citizens and noncitizens in the United States has risen consistently since its record low in 1970:

*Foreign-Born Citizens and Noncitizens in the United States*

Year	Raw Number	% of U.S. Population
1970	9.6 million	4.7
1980	14.1 million	6.2
1990	19.8 million	7.9
2000	31.1 million	11.1
2006	37.5 million	12.5

However, foreign-born citizens remain a smaller portion of the population than they were one century ago, during the last large wave of migration. From 1870-1910, the foreign born population in the U.S. varied from 14.4-14.8% of the U.S. population.

### Major categories of foreign-born citizens and noncitizens

**Naturalized Citizens:** These are persons who were not born citizens, but have lawfully obtained citizenship. There are approximately 15.7 million naturalized citizens in the United States.

**Lawful Permanent Residents** (also known as Green Card holders): These are persons who have the right to live permanently in the United States. They can become citizens after spending enough time in the United States and meeting other requirements. There are approximately 12.1 million Lawful Permanent Residents in the United States. About one million individuals became Lawful Permanent Residents in 2007. 59% of those individuals already lived in the United States when they received Green Card status.

- 66% were granted Green Cards based on their family relationships
- 15% were accepted for employment purposes
- 13% were refugees and asylum-seekers who adjusted to Green Card status
- 4% won the Diversity Lottery for people from countries with previously low rates of immigration
- 2% received Green Cards for other reasons



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**Temporary Migrants:** 25.8 million temporary migrants were admitted to the United States in 2006. Because some entered multiple times, there was a total of 33.7 million admissions for temporary migrants in 2006 (excluding certain Mexicans and Canadians). Of the 33.7 million admissions:

**88.9% were temporary visitors**  
(e.g., pleasure, business)

**5.1% were temporary workers and their families**  
(e.g., professionals in specialty occupations, seasonal workers, artists, traders, and investors)

**3.5% were students and exchange visitors and their families**

**2.5% were individuals who received visas for other reasons**

There were an additional 141 million admissions of certain Mexicans and Canadians on temporary (nonimmigrant) visas in 2006. "Certain" refers principally to Canadians who travel to the U.S. for tourist or business purposes, as well as Mexicans who have – for employment purposes, for example – a non-resident Border Crossing card, also known as a laser visa or a multiple-entry nonimmigrant visa.

**Undocumented migrants:** There are an estimated 11.6 million undocumented migrants in the United States.

## The Challenges of Immigration Reform

After failing to reach an accord on immigration in 2006 or 2007, Congress did not address the contentious issue during the 2008 election season. During that time, the Bush administration and several states took actions that have raised a number of important issues. They include:



**Verification Programs.** A handful of states and localities have started taking immigration policy into their own hands, often requiring employers to check employees' status with the E-Verify program, a pilot government system. However, the system is known to be highly inaccurate and to misclassify many legal workers as illegal.

**Naturalization Fees.** Naturalization fees have increased substantially in recent years, leading to a significant naturalization application backlog, caused by applicants hurrying to apply before the fee increase took effect. This may leave many legal immigrants ineligible to vote.

**Border Security.** Border security remains a major concern. Protests and lawsuits over the building of a fence along the Texas border have delayed its construction.

**Workplace Raids.** The Bush Administration increased enforcement measures, including raids of workplaces in search of unauthorized workers and arrests and imprisonment of unauthorized workers near border crossings. These measures have raised a number of concerns for the civil liberties of those arrested, as well as the wellbeing of the legal workers, children, and family members affected by the enforcement measures.

**Visas for Iraqis.** More visas will be issued to Iraqis who are endangering their lives by working for and with Americans in Iraq.



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## Immigration Reform and the Obama Administration

In a recent *Beneson Strategy Group* poll, we see that immigration reform has become a key issue for Americans since President Obama's inauguration.

- 86% of Americans support Congress passing "comprehensive immigration reform," even without a clear explanation of what this means.
- Seven in ten Americans agree that the approximately twelve million illegal immigrants already in the U.S. should be eventually allowed to apply for citizenship. This assumes first cracking down on employers hiring illegally, and deporting those who have committed crimes or repeatedly violated the law.
- A majority of voters (72%) are in favor of tackling immigration reform as soon as possible.

### In terms of economics, many Americans see immigration reform as a positive step.

- More Americans (71%) believe that we would be better off if these illegal immigrants were citizens, and thus taxpayers, than the number (26%) who argue that we would be better off stopping them from taking US jobs.



## When looking at which aspect of immigration concerns Americans the most, it is clear that economics play a predominant role.

- About one half of Americans are most concerned about illegal immigrants using taxpayer services without paying taxes.
- 20% were most concerned that illegal immigrants broke the law to enter the country.
- 17% were most concerned that they are taking away American jobs.
- 8% were most concerned that they do not speak English.

**President Obama and leaders in Congress have shown a great deal of interest in immigration reform.** This is driven by what is in the best interest for the United States' economy and the best interest of the average American worker.

### The Obama administration's plans for immigration include:

- Strengthening border control.
- Fixing "dysfunctional bureaucracy," enabling legal immigration so families can stay together.
- Removing incentives to enter illegally by preventing hiring of undocumented illegal immigrants.
- Allowing undocumented immigrants in good standing to pay a fine, learn English, and go to the back of the line for a chance at U.S. citizenship.
- Working with Mexico to promote economic development, which will lead to a decrease in the economic drivers that cause illegal immigration.



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## Immigration: Messaging Themes

### **Theme #1: We Need Workable Solutions**

To protect economic and national security, the immigration system must humanely and realistically address the question of illegal workers. The stick and carrot must go hand in hand. The presence of illegal immigrants is unfair to legal immigrants and American taxpayers. Since it's not a practical solution to round up and deport 12 million men, women, and children, we must work toward solutions that stand a chance at success.

**Conditional Path to Citizenship.** Immigration reform must provide a way for undocumented workers to come out of the shadows, get in the back of the line for citizenship if they have a clean criminal record, learn English, and perhaps pay some kind of fine. At the same time, we must crackdown on employers that employ or exploit undocumented workers.

**Visas.** Enforcement programs should be coupled with making more visas available to address our real economic need for foreign workers. The White House reported in 2007 that 15% of those waiting for green cards were already living in the United States, many illegally.

Ways to improve the situation include:

- Both short-term seasonal visas and long-term immigration opportunities should be made available annually.
- Delays in the visa application process should not prevent qualified applicants from receiving visas.
- The quantity of visas available should be both predictable and adjustable to meet changes in economic demand.
- By making green cards available, the incentives for illegal immigration will decrease.

**Keep Worksite Raids Humane.** Worksite raids, although sometimes necessary, should be done humanely and fairly, with respect for workers' constitutional and statutory rights, and only on the basis of legitimate information about workers' status. Any new employment verification measures must be matched with improved federal data-managing capabilities to ensure that they are accurate tools.

### **Theme #2: Upholding Our Nation's Values Upholds our Security**

Our historical commitment to welcoming foreigners is an essential foreign policy tool. Our economic and intellectual authority depends on our openness to ideas and talent from all over the world. Foreign visitors learn about our culture and institutions, which can help diffuse many of the myths about America perpetuated around the world. Keeping America open is critical because:

- At least 131 world leaders, including many of America's greatest allies, were educated in the United States.
- Our commitment to refugees carries important moral force.
- Finally, Immigrants have unique cultural and language abilities that help our intelligence and military apparatus.

To retain this critical source of foreign policy strength, we must continue to welcome foreign visitors and their ideas. We must treat non-citizens humanely and inclusively. Second-class status for non-citizens will lead to a culture of fear that can threaten domestic security. Immigrant workers should be paid and treated fairly, immigrant children should be educated, non-citizens in detention should be given adequate healthcare, and enforcement actions should be taken with respect for the civil liberties and needs of non-citizens and their families.



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## Immigration: Messaging Themes Continued

### **Theme #3: Our Broken System Hurts Everyone – We Must Move Forward Together**

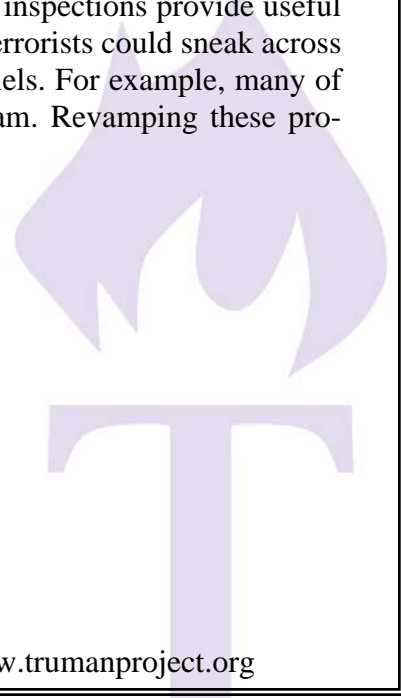
No one benefits from our broken immigration system. It undermines domestic stability and our economy, while making the challenge of tracking terrorists and responding to other security threats more difficult. It is therefore in everyone's best interest to enact comprehensive immigration reform.

**Economic Costs.** An available, predictable, and legal workforce of both skilled and unskilled workers is important for our economic security. Large companies like Microsoft, American farms, and numerous small businesses depend on foreign workers, skilled and unskilled. If these businesses cannot reliably hire workers in the United States, we stand to lose not only competitive talent, but also business to other countries. That's bad for everyone in America.

**Cost of Visa Delays.** Border checks should not be so slow or imprecise that they deter or prevent genuine immigrants and visitors from coming to the United States. Visa applications and border checks should be short and effective in distinguishing those with malicious intentions from those in search of a better future. Visa delays following September 11th cost firms upwards of \$30 billion, which hurts the entire economy.

**Importance of Effective Screening.** Thanks to the database of the Terrorist Screening Center, at least 40,000 persons with potential terrorist connections have been detected trying to enter the United States legally. Reforming the immigration process and devoting ample resources to processing and screening new visa entrants is a first-line defense against terrorists trying to infiltrate the U.S. – improving the process will thus improve everyone's safety.

**Tracking Terrorists.** The immigration system is one tool among many that can help meet domestic security imperatives, including deterring crime and terrorism. Visa applications and border inspections provide useful opportunities to screen for criminals and terrorists. While it remains possible that terrorists could sneak across our northern or southern borders, this is far less likely than their using legal channels. For example, many of the 9/11 hijackers entered the U.S. legally through the Visa Waiver Pilot Program. Revamping these programs will help improve national security for everyone in the United States.





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