

Principles of Immigration Reform

Written by Christopher Beckwith
Thursday, 22 October 2009 19:00

On October 13, 2009, thousands of people rallied around the nation in support of comprehensive immigration reform. At the Washington D.C. rally, I was honored to stand alongside my good friend and colleague, Congressman Luis Gutierrez as he released the following principles that will guide us in crafting a humane and compassionate comprehensive immigration reform bill:

- A Pathway to legalization for undocumented workers;
- Professional and effective border enforcement;
- Smart and humane interior enforcement;
- Protecting workers;
- Employment Verification systems;
- Family unity as a cornerstone of our immigration system;
- Future flows of workers;
- Incorporating the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act;
- Incorporating the American DREAM Act; and
- Promoting immigrant integration.

Immigrant families and the communities in which they live continue to face the daily nightmare of a broken immigration system. Deportations split families, the threat of enforcement drives work off the books and into the underground economy, and the legal immigration system remains an unrelenting bureaucracy. But what is a political issue to some literally rips fathers and mothers from their children and keeps siblings separated for decades on a daily basis in immigrant communities.

From my perspective, this is not a political issue, this is about people and family, and our values as a nation of immigrants. These family values, these American values, must remain at the core of American immigration policy and of our country.

These are the reasons why I introduced the Reuniting Families Act, which would ensure that family reunification remains a foundation of our immigration system, and the Strengthen and Unite Communities with Civics Education and English Skills Act of 2009, which would provide our hard working immigrants with the tools to integrate into society. By providing American workers with the tools to succeed— that is, their families and education – we help make our communities stronger and more resilient. The benefits to our economy and our communities cannot be overstated. Efficient, fair and effective avenues for legal, family-based immigration are vital to keep America strong.

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The progress towards comprehensive immigration reform has been slow; and the perceived lack of significant change in the daily lives of immigrant families with regard to our current broken policies are all taking a toll. In Congress, we are responding to this urgency felt in immigrant communities and are uniting to craft and introduce progressive and compassionate legislation because we know that comprehensive immigration reform cannot, and should not, wait any longer.

It's time for the broken system to be fixed. It's time for our families, all our families, to end their long separations. So I ask for everyone's help as we begin a grassroots campaign to prepare for the ensuing debate. Together we will help break the logjam and ensure that this Congress is the one to finally pass comprehensive immigration reform.