

President's Statement on Bipartisan Immigration System Proposal

Today, Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate came together and agreed upon a proposal that offers a much needed solution to the problem of illegal immigration in this country. This proposal delivers an immigration system that is secure, productive, orderly and fair. I applaud the Senators who worked in the spirit of bipartisanship over the past months to address this issue, which is critically important to the American people.

Our immigration system is badly in need of reform. The bipartisan solution the senators agreed to today requires us to meet important goals in addressing border security and enhancing interior and worksite enforcement. Once those goals are met, the plan would create a temporary worker program to address the needs of our growing economy and take pressure off the border by allowing workers to come to this country for a short period of time and fill jobs Americans are not doing. For immigrants wishing to come to our country permanently in the future, it would also establish a new merit-based system, which takes into account job skills, education, English proficiency and family ties.

The plan would bring undocumented workers already in this country out of the shadows without amnesty and without animosity. It would require workers to pay a meaningful penalty, learn English, pay their taxes, and pass a background check before they can be considered for legalized status. If they achieve this legalized status and decide they want to apply for a green card, they must return home to file an application in order to get in line behind all of those who have played by the rules and followed the law.

Finally, our country has been a melting pot for over 200 years and that has given us much strength. We must continue to help immigrants assimilate into our society. This proposal would further that effort by affirming that English is the language of the United States and would help immigrants learn our language by directing the Department of Education to make English instruction freely available over the Internet.

Convictions run deep on the matter of immigration, but with this bipartisan agreement I am confident leaders in Washington can have a serious, civil and conclusive debate so I can sign comprehensive reform into law this year. I urge all members to support this bipartisan immigration reform proposal.

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