

Reuters

US cities, companies team up on immigration reform

By Karina Ioffee

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Some of the United States' largest cities and corporations joined forces on Thursday to lobby Congress to create a path for undocumented immigrants to legalize their status and to secure the country's borders.

Led by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and News Corp ([NWSA.O](#)) Chief Executive Rupert Murdoch, the Partnership for a New American Economy aims to put the spotlight back on immigration reform by publishing studies and polls supporting the economic benefits and ultimately pushing Congress for new legislation.

The mayors of Los Angeles, San Antonio, Philadelphia and Phoenix have joined the coalition, along with companies including Hewlett-Packard ([HPQ.N](#)), Walt Disney Co ([DIS.N](#)), Marriott International ([MAR.N](#)), Boeing ([BA.N](#)), and Morgan Stanley ([MS.N](#)).

"This coalition was formed to change our current immigration policy, which is undermining our economy and threatening our status as the world's leading power," Bloomberg said in a statement. "We need to break the legislative stalemate that has taken over Congress."

Roughly 11 million people are thought to be living in the United States illegally. President Barack Obama has so far failed to deliver on a promise of an immigration overhaul he made to Hispanic voters. His Democratic Party faces a tough fight to maintain its congressional majorities in elections in November.

A deep rift over immigration has worsened since April by a new Arizona law that requires state and local police to investigate the immigration status of people they suspect are in the country illegally.

"American ingenuity is a product of the openness and diversity of this society," said Australian-born Murdoch.

"As an immigrant myself, I believe that this country can and must enact new immigration policies that fulfill our employment needs, provide a careful pathway to legal status for undocumented residents, and end illegal immigration," he said.

The partnership said companies were challenged by a lack of visas for professional workers and also called for a better process to allow employers to fill seasonal and permanent jobs with immigrants when U.S. citizens are unavailable.

It also wants to increase the opportunities for foreign students in the United States to stay and work, and for the country's borders to be secured through tougher enforcement and better use of technology.

"Delays at the federal level have created tension in our streets and economic hardship for our already budget-challenged cities and communities," said Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon.

"Immigration reform that secures our borders and encourages legal migration is absolutely essential to our country's economic recovery and to safeguarding the freedoms every citizen holds dear," he said.