

Is immigration reform starting to take shape?

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In the midst of nationwide scrutiny over the fiscal cliff deal, President Obama [announced a new immigration rule](#) that will affect millions of U.S. families with undocumented relatives.

Currently, if an undocumented family member were to leave the United States, apply for a visa, and come back, it could take up to ten years for a legally recognized return. However, effective March 4, a signed waiver will accelerate the process.

This new policy is a step in the right direction, Seth Freed Wessler of [colorlines.com](#) said to host Melissa Harris-Perry on Saturday –but “the pressure is really on” for comprehensive immigration reform.

Wessler reflected on his encounters with dozens of immigrant parents in U.S. detention centers. “These parents...are losing touch with their kids” because of the current unaccommodating laws. “Their kids are being taken out of these families and are stuck in foster homes.”

Carmen Wong Ulrich, president of Alta Wealth Management, added that most of the people whom the U.S. deports do not pose a threat to the American job market because they are doing the less desirable, low-wage labor on which our economy is based. Democratic consultant Jamal Simmons agreed that these “other jobs” are the backbone of the American economy. “We absolutely do better because of immigration,” Simmons said.

Still, deportation numbers are at a historic high, having increased each year since President Obama took office in 2008.

Newly appointed congresswoman Kyrsten Sinema mentioned that legislators have been tiptoeing around the same major components of immigration reform, yet have not been able to enact policies. The consistent talking points are securing the borders to be able to discern the “good guys” from the bad. Second, to adjust the quota system to meet market demands. And third, to help those who live in the shadows to come out: “these families, these kids, the dreamers.”

With young people last year being boosted by the DREAM Act and this new waiver system to go into effect in March, immigration reform has not been wholly neglected. But it needs to be a top priority for President Obama in his second term.

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