

# New sources of support for immigration reform

By: Mercedes White/Deseret News  
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WASHINGTON — Conservatives have tended to oppose immigration reform and amnesty for undocumented workers. Prominent Republicans, however, have recently come out in support of massive immigration overhauls.

At a Jan. 29 event in Las Vegas, President Barack Obama called for broad changes to the nation's immigration laws. [From his speech](#):

"The time has come for common sense, comprehensive immigration reform. ... I'm here because most Americans agree that it's time to fix the system that's been broken for way too long. I'm here because business leaders, faith leaders, labor leaders, law enforcement and leaders from both parties are coming together to say now is the time to find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as the land of opportunity."

Obama's immigration reform proposal includes providing undocumented workers a path to citizenship, a requirement for employers to check workers' immigration status and stiffer penalties for those who break immigration law, [reported the Tampa Bay Times](#).

Although in the past many GOP lawmakers have been reluctant to support immigration reform, the tides may be changing, according to a report from [America's Voice](#), a pro-immigration group based in Washington, D.C.

"The immigration reform tide turned once and for all on Nov. 6, 2012. The elections produced a mandate for immigration reform," according to Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice.

"(The 2013) State of the Union address and the President's call for comprehensive immigration reform led to one of the only bipartisan standing ovations," he added. "Although the anti-immigrant movement has always been loud ... their influence today is much diminished. Meanwhile, the power of the immigration reform movement is growing every day in depth and breadth."

Sharry may have a point. A growing number of conservatives, including Tea Party lawmakers, religious groups and conservative media leaders, are part of the growing momentum calling for comprehensive immigration reform to include citizenship, according to a [blog post by Rebecca Leber for ThinkProgress](#). Leber outlines five unexpected sources of support for the policy change, including:

- Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., who said in an [interview with Politico](#) after the 2012 elections that he plans to pursue measures that have long been avoided by his party, including

carving an immigration plan with an “eventual path” to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

- [Fox News Chief Roger Ailes](#), who said in an interview with the [New Republic](#), "I think the word ‘illegal immigration’ is a false name. We should all defend sovereignty, then take a Judeo-Christian approach to immigration. I don’t have any problem with a path to citizenship.”
- Conservative religious groups, including [Evangelicals](#) and [Mormons](#).

Many Republicans are beginning to question the sources for their information on the economic and social impacts of immigration, which include the [Center for Immigration Studies](#) and [Numbers USA](#), after [Mother Jones linked](#) the organizations' founder to a group that supports strict population control and has also backed abortion, sterilization and other policies at odds with conservative ideology, [reported Peter Wallersten for the Washington Post](#).

In a [Politico opinion](#) piece, Frank Cannon and Jeffrey Bell of the [conservative American Principles Project](#) argue that, "Conservatives have been taking at face value this restrictionist crowd for too long. Beginning around 2006, in fact, many Republicans abandoned the fervently pro-immigration beliefs of Ronald Reagan and began articulating an ugly nativist narrative that has alienated millions of foreign-born and minority voters."

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