



Principles for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Fix Our Immigration Laws Now

The United States Should Stand for the Principles of Justice and Equity.

Yet our immigration laws fail on both counts. It is time to reform our laws and strengthen these traditions.

The Status Quo is Broken.

Current immigration policies leave millions of immigrants in the shadows, vulnerable to abuse because they lack legal documentation, and unable to fully participate in a country they help build. The mismatch between outdated policies and the economic realities of our country has led thousands of deaths at the border and to millions of immigrants being denied basic rights.

We Need to Restore Integrity, Equity, and Effectiveness to our Immigration System.

It is possible to have an immigration system that respects the rights of all, protects individuals fleeing persecution, makes us all more secure, and acknowledges the economic, social, and cultural contributions of immigrants. We need an approach to immigration that is safe, efficient, and accountable.

The Solution:

A Comprehensive Approach that Makes Immigration Sense for America and its Newcomers

- **Provide a Path to Permanent Resident Status and Citizenship for All Members of Our Communities.** Our immigration policy needs to be consistent with reality. Most immigrants are encouraged to come to the United States by economic forces they do not control. Immigrants bring prosperity to this country, yet many are kept in legal limbo. Legalization of the undocumented members of our communities would benefit both immigrants and their families *and* the U.S.-born, by raising the floor for all and providing all with equal labor protections.
- **Reunite Families and Reduce Backlogs.** Immigration reform will not be successful until we harmonize public policy with one of the main factors driving migration: family unity. Currently families are separated by visa waiting periods and processing delays that can last decades. Comprehensive immigration reform must strengthen the family preference system, by increasing both the number of visas available both overall and within each category. In addition, the bars to re-entry, must be eliminated, so that no one who is eligible for an immigrant visa is punished by being separated from their family for many years.
- **Provide Opportunities for Safe Future Migration and Maintaining Worker Protections.** With respect to worker visas, we need a “break-the-mold” program. Such a program must include: legal visas for workers and their families; full labor rights (such as the right to organize and independent enforcement rights); the right to change jobs; and a path to permanent residence and citizenship. A regulated worker visa process must meet clearly defined labor market needs, and must not resemble current or historic temporary worker programs. The



new system must create a legal and safe alternative for migrants, facilitate and enforce equal rights for all workers, and minimize the opportunities for abuse by unscrupulous employers and others.

- **Respect the Safety and Security of All in Immigration Law Enforcement.** Fair enforcement practices are key to rebuilding trust among immigrant communities and protecting the security of all. Any immigration law enforcement should be conducted with professionalism, accountability, and respect. Furthermore, there should be effective enforcement of laws against human trafficking and worker exploitation.
- **Recognize Immigrants' Full Humanity.** Immigrants are more than just workers. Immigrants are neighbors, family members, students, members of our society, and an essential part of the future of the United States. Our immigration policies should provide immigrants with opportunities to learn English, naturalize, lead prosperous lives, engage in cultural expression, and receive equitable access to needed services and higher education. Support for immigrants must also include adequate resources to provide for decent, safe and affordable housing to help meet the critical housing needs of the 2.2 million – one in five – immigrant families residing in the U.S..
- **Restore Fundamental Civil Rights of Immigrants.** Since September 11, 2001, implementation of sweeping law enforcement policies have not only failed to make us safer from future attacks, but undermined our security, while eroding fundamental civil liberties. Failure to protect these fundamental rights goes against the core values of a democracy, and, therefore, the United States. For the benefit of everyone, and not just immigrants, these basic rights must be restored and protected.
- **Protect the Rights of Refugees and Asylees.** The United States has always been viewed as a safe haven for those fleeing persecution. Yet, since September 11, 2001, significantly fewer refugees have been admitted. The U.S. government has an obligation to remove barriers to admission and save the lives of thousands of people across the world who are fleeing for their lives. In addition, our current policies treat many asylees unequally based on their country of origin. Our country must ensure fair and equal treatment of individuals and their family members seeking asylum, and end the inhumane detention and warehousing of asylum seekers.

FIRM is led by a coalition of grassroots community organizations working on behalf of immigration reform and immigrant rights. The coalition consists of organizing networks, statewide immigrant rights coalitions, and faith-based and low-income groups, and works in partnership with national organizations.