

FULLFILLING THE PROMISE OF COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

THE CONTEXT

The nation's immigration system is in urgent need of reform that restores dignity and the rule of law and rejects a status quo that does neither. Congressional failure to enact reform has led to piecemeal measures that are introducing greater chaos into an already broken system, particularly those enacted at the state and local levels, which lack jurisdiction over immigration. Alarming, such measures, combined with the toxic tone of the immigration debate, have also fomented an environment of intolerance against immigrants, regardless of immigration status, and against Hispanics in general, making this a defining civil rights issue for the Latino community.

The enactment of piecemeal laws that deal with immigration has been ineffective in reducing the size of the undocumented population. Now forced more deeply into the shadows, this population is more susceptible to exploitation by unscrupulous employers to the detriment of all workers. While dysfunctional legal immigration policies keep families apart and legal workers out, heavy-handed enforcement operations have terrorized communities and led to the unlawful detention of legal immigrants and citizens.

It is time for the federal government to accept its responsibility and exercise leadership to fix these failed policies. The country needs real solutions that are aligned with America's best values and traditions.

THE SOLUTION

In reality, there is much consensus around solutions to the immigration issue. Poll after poll demonstrates that the American public is in a much more pragmatic place than Congress has been on this issue. This has been corroborated further in recent election cycles, which showed that voters rejected leading anti-immigrant candidates. Voters support a comprehensive overhaul of our broken system that restores the rule of law and includes legalization and smart enforcement.

NCLR (National Council of La Raza) supports a workable and humane immigration system that promotes legality, serves the national interest, and upholds the Constitution and our values. To achieve those goals, reform must:

- Restore the rule of law through a two-pronged approach that includes earned legalization and sensible enforcement. Neither of these measures alone can restore order to the system.
- Preserve the rule of law by creating workable legal immigration channels that uphold family unity and protect workers' rights.
- Strengthen the fabric of America by adopting proactive measures that advance the successful integration of new immigrants.

The sense of urgency and possibility for real change in immigration are stronger than ever. A constructive debate and smart solutions are needed to move the country forward. Join the effort to make reform a reality at www.nclr.org/TakeAction. For more information on NCLR's work on immigration, visit www.nclr.org/immigration.