

The Consequences Of Inaction

Top Five Reasons The Bipartisan Immigration Reform Bill Must Be Passed This Year

"...[N]ow is the time to move a comprehensive bill that enforces our borders and has good workplace enforcement; that doesn't grant automatic citizenship; that addresses this problem in a comprehensive way. I would hope that the Senate Majority Leader has that same sense of desire to move ... the bill that I do and these senators do, because now is the time to get it done. ... I believe without the bill it's going to be harder to enforce the border. The status quo is unacceptable."

- President George W. Bush, 6/12/07

If The Bipartisan Immigration Reform Bill Now Being Considered By The Senate Is Not Passed, The U.S. Will Be Left With A Status Quo That Is Unacceptable. The current immigration system is broken:

- Border security and interior enforcement laws need to be improved.
- Employers do not have the tools they need to verify the work eligibility of their employees with assurance.
- As many as 12 million illegal workers remain in the shadows.
- Only around 13 percent of green cards are awarded each year based on employment-related criteria, and far too little emphasis is placed on the skills and attributes necessary to fill the needs of our growing economy and further the national interest.
- There is no efficient mechanism by which willing foreign workers may be hired for jobs Americans are not doing.

This Bill Represents The Best Chance To Move Forward On Fixing Our Broken Immigration System

1) The Bill Contains Tough New Border Security And Enforcement Measures.

- **The Bill Commits The Most Resources To Border Security In U.S. History.** The bill includes border security triggers such as: increasing border fencing and vehicle barriers at the Southern border; increasing the size of the Border Patrol; installing ground-based radar and camera towers along the Southern border; and ensuring that resources are available to maintain the effective end of "Catch and Release" at our border.
- **The Bill Improves Our Laws To Better Safeguard National Security And Prevent Future Illegal Immigration.**
The bill:
 - Allows the government to detain dangerous criminal aliens who cannot be removed from the U.S. because no other country is willing to accept them. Under current law, they must be released back into society after just six months.
 - Gives the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice tools to keep certain aliens out of the U.S. solely on the basis of their participation in a gang. No conviction is required – if an individual has participated in a gang and helped "aid" or "support" its illegal activity, then he or she is not eligible for admission to the U.S.
 - Substantially increases criminal penalties for repeated illegal border crossings.
 - Imposes substantial new criminal penalties for passport, visa, and other immigration fraud.
 - Includes several provisions that would improve coordination between Federal, State, and local governments in enforcing immigration laws and expeditiously deporting criminal aliens.

2) The Bill Will Give Employers The Tools They Need To Verify The Work Eligibility Of Their Employees. Today, we have an entire underground industry dedicated to producing fake IDs and fraudulent Social Security numbers. If this bill is not passed, the problems of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act would persist – employers would continue operating under a system in which they have only a limited ability to tell whether documentation is authentic.

- **The Bill Requires The Establishment Of A Reliable Employment Eligibility Verification System (EEVS) To Help Employers Verify The Work Eligibility Of All Employees.** All workers will be required to present stronger and more readily verifiable identification documents.

➤ **EEVS Will Allow Employers To Verify The Authenticity Of Documents By Providing Access For The First Time To Identification Photographs In Government Databases.**

● **EEVS Will Be Founded On Unprecedented Verification Of Information Across Numerous Electronic Databases.** These include:

- Department of Homeland Security records;
- Social Security Administration records;
- State Department passport and visa records (including photographs);
- Birth and death records maintained by State vital statistics agencies; and
- State driver's license information.

3) The Bill Will Bring As Many As 12 Million Current Undocumented Workers Out Of The Shadows. If the bill is not passed, these workers would remain in the shadows of our society, where they are often exploited, underpaid, and afraid to go to the police for fear of deportation.

➤ **The Senate Bill Provides A Mechanism For Undocumented Workers With Clean Records And Steady Jobs To Come Out Of The Shadows And Be Accounted For In A Regulated System, On A Probationary Basis.** This will help keep our Nation secure by letting law enforcement officials know who is in the country and allowing immigration enforcement officers to focus their resources on apprehending violent criminals and terrorists.

➤ **The Senate Bill Provides Greater Incentives For Employers And Workers To Follow The Law By Implementing Much Tougher Worksite Enforcement Measures.** EEVS will give employers the tools they need to verify the status of workers they hire. Employers who continue to hire illegal workers will face stiff new criminal and civil penalties – for example, the maximum criminal penalty for a pattern or practice of hiring illegal workers will increase 25-fold, from \$3,000 per alien to \$75,000 per alien.

4) The Bill Will Clear The Current Family Backlog And Reform The Immigration System To Better Balance The Importance Of Family Connections With U.S. Economic Needs. Currently, applicants wait up to 30 years for green cards. In addition, our immigration system places far too little emphasis on the skills and attributes necessary to fill the needs of our growing economy and further the national interest.

➤ **The Senate Bill Will Clear The Current Decades-Long Backlog Of Family-Based Applications Within Eight Years.** During this time, there will be a surge in family reunification, as more than two-thirds of green cards issued will go to family members. Even after family backlogs are cleared and the rebalancing of visas is complete, there will be more family-based green cards issued than merit-based green cards.

➤ **The Bill Will Help Keep The U.S. Competitive In The Global Economy By Establishing A New Merit-Based System For Immigration That Is Similar To Those Used By Other Countries.** Under the merit-based system, future immigrants applying for permanent residency in the U.S. will be assigned points for attributes that further our national interest, including: skills and work experience, with added points for U.S. employment in a specialty or high-demand field; education, with added points for training in science, math, and technology; employer endorsement; ability to speak English; and family ties to the U.S.

● **Once The Backlogs Of Employment-Based Applicants And Family-Based Applicants Are Cleared, There Will Be 380,000 Green Cards Available Under The Merit-Based System – Up From 140,000 Employment-Based Green Cards Today.** This is a 170 percent increase over the current level of employment-based green cards, reforming our system from one in which about 13 percent of green cards are employment-based to one in which about 32 percent of green cards are issued through the merit-based system.

● **The Bill Includes A Large, Immediate Increase – From 65,000 Today To 115,000 For The First Year – In The H-1B Visa Cap For Skilled Foreign Workers.** After the first year, the cap will rise and fall based on economic need, allowing it to adjust up to as high as 180,000.

5) The Bill Will Create A Temporary Worker Program To Alleviate Pressure On The Border And Provide The U.S. Economy With An Efficient Mechanism To Match The Skills Of Willing Foreign Workers To The Demands Of Available Jobs.

- **Under The Senate Bill, A Temporary Worker Program Will Allow U.S. Law Enforcement To Focus More Of Its Resources On Apprehending Violent Criminals And Terrorists Who Pose A Threat To Our Security.** The temporary worker program will help reduce the number of people trying to sneak across our borders by providing a lawful and orderly channel for foreign workers to fill the jobs that Americans are not doing.
- **This Temporary Worker Program Has The Toughest Labor Standards And The Most Robust Protections For U.S. Workers Of Any Existing U.S. Nonimmigrant Worker Program.**
 - Before hiring a temporary worker under the bill, an employer must first try to recruit U.S. workers for 90 days – three times longer than any other temporary worker program.
 - Temporary workers under the bill must be paid the prevailing competitive wage, which is based on the wages paid to U.S. workers, and ensures that the wages of U.S. workers cannot be undercut.