



Congressional Hispanic Caucus

The Honorable Charles Gonzalez, Chair

November 28, 2012

ONE NATION:

Principles on Immigration Reform and Our Commitment to the American Dream

Today, we declare our commitment to the American people to work tirelessly toward common-sense, comprehensive immigration reform that serves America's interests, promotes fairness and the rule of law and contributes effectively and meaningfully to our economic well-being and recovery.

America has always been a nation of immigrants. In order to preserve our history, national identity and culture we must create a modern, 21st century legal immigration system that reflects our legacy. Therefore, we commit to fighting for principled, comprehensive immigration reform that:

1. Requires the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. to register with the federal government, submit to fingerprinting and a criminal background check, learn English and American civics, and pay taxes to contribute fully and legally to our economy and earn a path to permanent residency and eventual citizenship;
2. Protects the unity and sanctity of the family, including the families of bi-national, same-sex couples, by reducing the family backlogs and keeping spouses, parents, and children together;
3. Attracts the best and the brightest investors, innovators, and skilled professionals, including those in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) studies, to help strengthen our economy, create jobs, and build a brighter future for all Americans;
4. Builds on the extraordinary success of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and incorporates DREAMers—those who were brought to the U.S. at a young age and are Americans but for a piece of paper—into the mainstream of life in the United States through a path to citizenship so that America benefits from their scholastic achievements, military service and pursuit of their dreams;

5. Includes a balanced, workable solution for the agriculture industry that ensures agricultural workers have a route to citizenship and employers have the workers and American agriculture continues to lead in our global economy;
6. Ends the exploitation of U.S. and immigrant workers by providing sufficient, safe, and legal avenues for foreign workers to fill legitimate gaps in our workforce, with full labor rights, protection from discrimination, and a reasonable path to permanency that lifts up wages and working conditions for both native and foreign-born workers and their families;
7. Ensures smart and reasonable enforcement that protects our borders and fosters commerce by targeting serious criminals and real threats at our northern and southern borders and promotes the safe and legitimate movement of people and goods at our ports of entry and which are essential to our economy;
8. Establishes a workable employment verification system that prevents unlawful employment and rewards employers and employees who play by the rules, while protecting Americans' right to work and their privacy; and
9. Renews our commitment to citizenship, to ensure all workers pay their fair share of taxes, fully integrate into our way of life and bear the same responsibilities as all Americans and reaffirms our shared belief that the Citizenship Clause of the Constitution is a fundamental freedom that must be preserved.

Our immigration laws ought to reflect both our interests and our values as Americans and we believe these principles are consistent with our nation's commitment to fairness and equality. We commit to adhering to the above principles as we negotiate on behalf of all Americans in good faith with both parties and all stakeholders in the immigration reform debate. We acknowledge that the time to reform the system is long past due. We ask all sides to set aside the vitriol and gamesmanship that is often a part of this debate and that blocks our ability to truly solve the problem. The American people deserve nothing less.