

Republican Liberty Caucus Recommends Sensible, Free Market Immigration Reform

America was built on immigration. Immigration has been good for the country and should be part of a positive plan for real economic recovery. When individuals and families come to America to work they do not take jobs from American citizens. They contribute their labor and their income to the economy. Their contributions lead to more opportunities for business growth and new jobs for native workers.

The United States needs a better immigration reform plan that is unified and comprehensive. We need a plan based on free market principles that allows hard working people to come to America easily to expand our labor pool, improve their quality of life, create more opportunities and speed economic growth. Current plans seem overly complex, impractical and bureaucratic, full of compromises that will cripple the effort.

The authors of the Senate plan used failed past proposals as their starting point, rather than rethinking the issue, as was suggested in the "Texas Solution" proposed last year. They are pandering to the demands of high-pressure interest groups and their proposals do not provide solutions directed at the labor needs of the nation or the best interests of citizens, immigrants and businesses.

As leaders in Washington work on bipartisan immigration reform, the Republican Liberty Caucus (RLC) and its membership recommends the following suggestions. We urge legislators to consider these sensible policy approaches in developing their immigration reform plans.

The most important priority in any immigration proposal is that it not do harm to American citizens or businesses.

- Hard working American citizens should not be tagged and tracked by their government with a biometric ID system and a national employment database. This is a backwards way to approach this issue and a threat to civil liberties.
- The burden and expense of enforcing of immigration laws should never be placed on businesses, nor should they be penalized for hiring willing workers just because of their immigration status.
- The idea of securing the labor force by tracking native workers is unconscionable and punishing businesses for engaging in free market hiring practices is bad economic policy.
- We recommend issuing a secure and traceable entry visa to anyone approved to enter the US seeking work then upgrading that visa to a work permit when they find employment.
- Track the status of visas, not every innocent worker in America.

The central core of any immigration plan should be a robust guest worker program that allows labor to operate in a free market across borders so that workers can come here legally to find and fill available jobs.

- Let the demand for labor set a natural level on immigration without quotas, special preferences or restrictions for any group. There should not be arbitrary top limits on the number of visas or quotas by qualification or nationality.
- A thorough background check performed by immigration authorities when a visa is issued should be sufficient. Businesses should not have to go through exhaustive and expensive red tape just to hire willing workers.
- Workers currently here illegally should not be penalized if they choose to transition into the guest worker program.

- Those who just want to come here to work should not be forced into becoming permanent immigrants, nor should the focus of reforms be on expanding access for high-skill workers while ignoring the much more critical need for short-term, low-wage labor.
- A guest worker program should be used in place of a complex "pathway to citizenship" plan for most immigrants. While a "path to citizenship" may be a good idea for some foreign workers, it does not address the needs of the majority of those seeking entry or the real labor needs of the nation. Any "pathway to citizenship" program should be simple, speedy and inexpensive for all.
- Those who were brought here as minors who have no criminal record should be able to become permanent residents and apply for citizenship on completion of two years of college or military service.

Border security should also be addressed through the free market.

- A guest worker program will solve the problem with migrants crossing the southern border to find work, diverting workers from illegal channels to legal channels and allowing border enforcement to concentrate on criminals and potential terrorists.
- The elevated level of border violence can best be dealt with through long needed changes in federal drug policy. New policy should allow states to legalize marijuana and end costly yet ineffective drug interdiction programs in the failed War on Drugs.
- Applying free market principles will also form an excellent foundation for weakening criminal organizations and reducing the incentives for human trafficking.

Public welfare programs should be limited to United States citizens and tax-paying residents.

- While we acknowledge that at this time there is very little legal access to public welfare programs for legal or illegal immigrants we would support a standardization of restrictions on access to these programs, as well as improvements in monitoring use of social services and in the enforcement of existing laws.
- In the long-term we should be looking at ways to reduce the dependence of citizens on public welfare programs and the many negative effects that they have on productivity and economic security.

Immigration reform should be part of a comprehensive policy of improving free market conditions to encourage economic growth.

- Greater availability of foreign workers should go hand in hand with tax reforms, particularly a substantial reduction in the federal corporate tax rate.
- Reforms should also include reassessing special privileges given to unions and the promotion of "right to work" legislation so that unions can be depoliticized and return to focusing on their original beneficial function of protecting the rights and safety of their members.