

July 24, 2008

To: Democratic National Committee Platform Committee
Re: Open Letter from Immigration Leaders

To Whom It May Concern:

As leaders in the fight to restore control and order to our immigration system, we urge you to make comprehensive immigration reform a central plank of the Democratic Party platform. While our country faces many policy challenges, reform of our deteriorating immigration system must be at the top of the list. In its 2008 platform, the Democratic Party can show the American people that it can tackle tough challenges and propose realistic solutions by embracing common-sense immigration reform.

The defining feature of our failed immigration system is a ballooning population of more than 12 million undocumented immigrants, the overwhelming majority of whom are simply striving to create better lives for themselves and their families. The American people are frustrated with this broken system and hunger for a practical, well-organized solution. They want neither open borders, nor closed borders. They want controlled borders and a realistic policy that requires undocumented workers to come out the shadows, register with the government, pay taxes, and work toward the requirements of U.S. citizenship. These workers should have no advantages over people who are in the U.S. legally, but they also should not be relegated to the underground economy.

We urge the drafting committee to join the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, Senator Barack Obama, and commit to advancing a smart, practical, comprehensive, and bipartisan immigration solution that restores the rule of law and embraces our heritage as a nation of immigrants. We also urge the committee to reject the Bush Administration's current enforcement strategy, which targets immigrant workers in SWAT team-style raids of workplaces and homes, rather than prioritizing the enforcement of labor laws against employers who exploit vulnerable workers. The Administration's enforcement tactics undermine workers' rights, create a state of siege in our communities, and have no measurable impact on reducing illegal immigration.

The consequences of our failed immigration policies bleed into nearly every important domestic policy arena, from the economy to healthcare to education to border security. As we have seen over these last few years, policymakers will find it difficult to make real progress on these important issues until the status of 12 million undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S. is addressed. We need an immigration policy that serves, not subverts, our national interests, that requires these workers to come forward and get on a path to legal status, that brings our family and employment-based immigration policies into the 21st century, that secures our borders, and that respects family unity, civil rights, and due process. We urge the Democratic Party to adopt these principles in its 2008 platform.

Sincerely,

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