

Securing America Through Immigration Reform

Today's Presidential Action:

Today, President Bush Outlined The Strategy To Enhance America's Homeland Security Through Comprehensive Immigration Reform. Addressing the Customs and Border Protection agents stationed in southern Arizona, the President discussed the strategy to secure the border, prevent illegal crossings, and strengthen enforcement of immigration laws. The President also proposed to take pressure off the border by creating a Temporary Worker Program that meets the economy's demands while rejecting amnesty for those who break America's laws.

- **Securing The Border Is Essential To Securing The Homeland.** Since he took office, the President has increased funding for border security by 60 percent. Border agents have apprehended and sent home more than 4.5 million people coming into the country illegally – including about 350,000 with criminal records. The U.S. border must be open to trade and tourism – and closed to criminals, drug dealers, and terrorists.

The President Will Work With Congress To Pass And Sign Into Law Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

Comprehensive immigration reform is a top priority for the Administration. Already, Congress is making great strides and has a chance to move forward on a strategy to enforce immigration laws, secure America, and uphold the Nation's deepest values. The President will continue working with Congress so that he can sign a comprehensive immigration reform bill into law in 2006.

The President's Strategy For Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Begins With Securing The Border. To secure the border, the President is pursuing a three-part plan.

- **First, The U.S. Will Return Every Illegal Entrant Caught Crossing The Southwest Border – With No Exceptions.** More than 85 percent of apprehended illegal immigrants are from Mexico, and most are immediately escorted back across the border within 24 hours. To prevent them from trying to cross again, the Federal government is using interior repatriation whereby Mexican illegal entrants are returned to their hometowns, making it more difficult for them to attempt another crossing. This approach is showing great promise. In a West Arizona desert pilot program, nearly 35,000 illegal immigrants were returned to Mexico through interior repatriation, and only about 8 percent turned up trying to cross the border in that sector again. The Administration is working to expand interior repatriation to ensure that when those who violate the country's immigration laws are sent home, they stay home.
- **The Administration Is Ending The Practice Of "Catch And Release."** Because detention facilities lack bed space, most non-Mexican illegal immigrants apprehended are released and directed to return for a court appearance. However, 75 percent fail to show. Last year, only 30,000 of the 160,000 non-Mexicans caught coming across our Southwest border were sent home. Addressing this problem, the President has signed legislation increasing the number of beds in detention facilities by more than 10 percent over the next year. The Federal government is also using "expedited removal" to detain, place into streamlined judicial proceedings, and deport non-Mexican illegal immigrants in an average of 32 days – almost three times faster than the usual procedure. Last year, more than 20,000 non-Mexicans caught crossing the border between Laredo and Tucson were deported using expedited removal. The use of expedited removal is now being expanded across the entire Southwest border. When illegal immigrants know they will be caught and sent home, they will be less likely to cross illegally in the first place.
- **The Administration Is Taking Further Steps To Accelerate The Removal Process.** The U.S. is pressing foreign governments to take back their citizens more promptly, while streamlining bureaucracy and increasing the number of flights carrying illegal immigrants home. Testing these steps, "Operation Texas Hold 'Em" along the Rio Grande Valley of the Texas Border recently resulted in Brazilian illegal immigration dropping by 90 percent in the Rio Grande Valley – and by 50 percent across the entire border. These efforts are helping change a policy of "catch

and release" to a policy of "catch and return."

- **Second, The Administration Will Work With Congress To Reform Immigration Laws.** The President is seeking to eliminate senseless rules that require the government to release illegal immigrants if their home countries do not take them back in a set period of time. Among those the government has been forced to release are murderers, rapists, child molesters, and other violent criminals. The President is also working with Congress to address the cycle of endless litigation that clogs immigration courts, rewards illegal behavior, and delays justice for immigrants with legitimate claims. Lawsuits and red tape must not stand in the way of protecting the American people.
- **Third, The Federal Government Will Act To Stop People From Illegally Crossing The Border In The First Place.** The Administration is increasing manpower, technology, and infrastructure at the Nation's borders, and integrating these resources in innovative ways.
 - **Increasing Manpower.** Since 2001, 1,900 Border Patrol agents have been added, and the President has signed legislation allowing the addition of another 1,000 agents in the year ahead. When the hiring is completed, the Border Patrol will have been enlarged by about 3,000 agents – from about 9,500 when the President took office to about 12,500 next year. This is an increase of more than 30 percent.
 - **Deploying New Technology.** The Administration is giving Border Patrol agents the tools to expand their reach and effectiveness including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and infrared cameras. In Tucson, agents using UAVs to patrol the border have improved their interception of illegal immigrants and drugs on the border. Legislation signed by the President is providing \$139 million to further upgrade technology and bring a more unified, systematic approach to border enforcement.
 - **Constructing Physical Barriers To Entry.** The President has signed legislation providing \$70 million to install and improve protective infrastructure across the border. In rural areas, the government is constructing new patrol roads to give agents better access to the border and new vehicle barriers to keep illegal immigrants from driving across. In urban areas, the government is expanding fencing to shut down human smuggling corridors. The Administration recently authorized the completion of a 14-mile barrier near San Diego. Once held up by litigation, this project is vital to helping border agents do their jobs and make those who live near the border more secure.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Requires Improved Enforcement Of Immigration Laws Within The United States. Catching and deporting illegal immigrants along the border is only part of protecting the American people. Our immigration laws must be enforced throughout America.

- **The Federal Government Is Improving Worksite Enforcement.** The President has signed legislation that more than doubles the resources dedicated to worksite enforcement. The government is placing a special focus on enforcement at critical infrastructure. This year, Operation Rollback – the largest worksite enforcement case in American history – resulted in the arrest of hundreds of illegal immigrants, criminal convictions against a dozen employers, and a multi-million dollar payment from one of America's largest businesses. Worksite enforcement is critical to the success of immigration reform.
 - **To Help Businesses Comply With Immigration Laws, The Government Is Addressing Document Fraud.** Even the most diligent employers find it difficult to spot forged employment documents and verify workers' legal status. So the Administration is expanding the Basic Pilot program enabling businesses to screen the employment eligibility of new hires against Federal records. Since 2001, this program has expanded from only six states to now being available nationwide. The Administration will work with Congress to continue to improve employment verification.
- **The President Has Committed The Resources Necessary To Enforce Immigration Laws.** Since 2001, the Administration has increased funding for interior enforcement by 44 percent; increased the number of immigration and customs investigators by 14 percent; and new funding will allow for an additional 400 immigration enforcement agents

and 250 criminal investigators. These skilled officers are getting results. In Arizona alone, 2,300 people have been prosecuted for smuggling drugs, guns, and illegal immigrants across the border. Operation Community Shield has resulted in the arrest of nearly 1,400 illegal immigrant gang members – including hundreds of members of violent gangs like "MS-13." Since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), agents have apprehended nearly 27,000 illegal immigrant fugitives.

As Part Of Comprehensive Immigration Reform, The President Has Proposed The Creation Of A New Temporary Worker Program. To match foreign workers with American employers for jobs that no American is willing to take, temporary workers will be able to register for legal status for a fixed time period and then be required to return home. This plan meets the needs of a growing economy, allows honest workers to provide for their families while respecting the law, and relieves pressure on the border. By reducing the flow of illegal immigrants, law enforcement can focus on those who mean this country harm. To improve worksite enforcement, the plan creates tamper-proof I.D. cards for every legal temporary worker.

➤ **A Temporary Worker Program Would Not Provide Amnesty.** The program does not create an automatic path to citizenship or provide amnesty. The President opposes amnesty because rewarding those who break the law would encourage more illegal entrants and increase pressure on the border. A Temporary Worker Program, by contrast, would promote legal immigration and decrease pressure on the border. The President supports increasing the annual number of green cards, but for the sake of justice and security, the President will not sign an immigration bill that includes amnesty.

By Reforming Immigration Laws, The United States Will Preserve The Promise Of America. Immigrants play a vital role in strengthening American democracy. This is a land in which foreigners who respect the laws are welcomed as contributors to American culture – not feared as threats. The United States has been strengthened by generations of immigrants who became Americans through patience, hard work, and assimilation. Like generations of immigrants that have come before them, every new citizen has an obligation to learn this Nation's customs and values. At the same time, America will fulfill its obligation to give each citizen a chance to realize the American dream. By enforcing immigration laws, the Federal government is protecting the promise of a tolerant, welcoming America and preserving opportunity for all.