

Democratic Party

[Excerpt from Draft 2008 Democratic Party National Platform, prepared for National convention]

Immigration

America has always been a nation of immigrants. Over the years, millions of people have come here in the hope that in America, you can make it if you try. Each successive wave of immigrants has contributed to our country's rich culture, economy and spirit. Like the immigrants that came before them, today's immigrants will shape their own destinies and enrich our country. 39

Nonetheless, our current immigration system has been broken for far too long. We need comprehensive immigration reform, not just piecemeal efforts. We must work together to pass immigration reform in a way that unites this country, not in a way that divides us by playing on our worst instincts and fears. We are committed to pursuing tough, practical, and humane immigration reform in the first year of the next administration.

For the millions living here illegally but otherwise playing by the rules, we must require them to come out of the shadows and get right with the law. We support a system that requires undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, pay taxes, learn English, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens. They are our neighbors, and we can help them become full tax paying, law-abiding, productive members of society.

At the same time, we cannot continue to allow people to enter the United States undetected, undocumented, and unchecked. The American people are a welcoming and generous people, but those who enter our country's borders illegally, and those who employ them, disrespect the rule of the law. We need to secure our borders, and support additional personnel, infrastructure and technology on the border and at our ports of entry. We need additional Customs and Border Protection agents equipped with better technology and real-time intelligence. We need to dismantle human smuggling organizations, combating the crime associated with this trade. We also need to do more to promote economic development in migrant-sending nations, to reduce incentives to come to the United States illegally. And we need to crack down on employers who hire undocumented immigrants, especially those who pay their workers less than the minimum wage. It's a problem when we only enforce our laws against the immigrants themselves, with raids that are ineffective, tear apart families and leave people detained without adequate access to counsel. We realize that employers need a method to verify whether their employees are legally eligible to work in the U.S., and will ensure that our system is accurate, fair to legal workers, safeguards people's privacy, and cannot be used to discriminate against workers.

We must also improve the legal immigration system, and make our nation's naturalization process fair and accessible to the thousands of legal permanent residents who are eager to become full Americans. We should fix the dysfunctional immigration bureaucracy that

hampers family reunification, the cornerstone of our immigration policy for years. Given the importance of both keeping families together and supporting American businesses, we will increase the number of immigration visas for family members of people living here and for immigrants who meet the demand for jobs that employers cannot fill, as long as appropriate labor market protections and standards are in place. We will fight discrimination against Americans who have always played by our immigration rules but are sometimes treated as if they had not.