



Making Immigration Work for America

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An effective immigration system must establish lasting solutions for border security and ensure we have the skilled workers our economy needs. Following recent executive actions, the border is now more secure than it has been in years. Funding from the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB BB) will support border security and reduce the incentives for illegal entry. We must combine border security and the rule of law with an orderly process for welcoming legal immigrants who contribute to America's economy.

The immigration system needs to be modernized to provide legal immigration pathways for workers in high-demand fields. We propose the following actions:

- 1. The federal government should keep the border secure and address the factors that encourage illegal immigration.** Just as companies employ leading innovations to improve processes and keep America competitive, the government should deploy cutting-edge technology, combined with physical barriers where appropriate, to enhance national security and improve the administration of immigration laws. Over the long term, the government should also sustain investments made in the OB BB in the personnel necessary to secure the border and enforce our immigration laws. Interior enforcement should prioritize those who pose the greatest threat. To address a magnet for illegal immigration, Congress must also prevent exploitation of our asylum system.
- 2. The United States should expand legal opportunities for temporary workers of all skill levels to contribute to marketplace needs.** A modern U.S. immigration system needs to provide legal channels for foreign-born workers to fill critical workforce gaps and foster innovation in industries such as health care, hospitality, agriculture and construction.
- 3. The United States should increase the number of skilled legal immigrants needed to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and contribute to the economy over the long term.** The United States cannot compete effectively with foreign competitors unless we grow the number of workers in high-demand fields including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- 4. The government should administer U.S. immigration laws in a timely, transparent and consistent manner.** Businesses are more likely to invest and grow in the United States if they know how the government will administer the immigration rules and can plan for predictable adjudication outcomes and timelines. Talented foreign workers are more likely to pursue opportunities in the United States if they know the rules will not change while they go through the process and that government delays will not disrupt their employment.
- 5. Congress should embrace a practical, bipartisan solution for Dreamers.** Congress needs to address individuals brought to the United States as minor children with fair, just and practical solutions.

Principle 1: The federal government should keep the border secure and address the factors that encourage illegal immigration.

Illegal border crossings are now at their lowest recorded levels in over 20 years. While this demonstrates that executive branch enforcement is effective when applied, congressional action is needed to ensure that the border remains secure for the long term.

Proposed solutions include:

- + **Maintain strong investments in border security.** To ensure the gains in border security do not erode, the federal government should efficiently utilize the new investments in physical barriers, technology and law enforcement personnel. These investments should also be used to effectively reduce immigration case backlogs and restore order to the system through the expansion of immigration judges and U.S. Department of Justice immigration attorneys. Current investments in personnel should not be a short-term surge, but maintained over the long term.
- + **Fixing our broken asylum system.** The asylum system is designed for those fleeing persecution. Legislation is needed to ensure that this system is not exploited by those without legitimate claims.
- + **Prioritizing enforcement.** An orderly deportation system consistent with the rule of law plays an important role in deterring illegal immigration. Resources should be focused on those who have committed violent crimes or pose a threat to national security.
- + **Phasing in mandatory use of an updated electronic employment eligibility verification (E-Verify) system that eliminates redundancies and facilitates rapid compliance.** A paper-based verification system is susceptible to fraud and has failed to serve as an effective deterrent. Congress should update E-Verify to preempt conflicting state laws and protect employers that use the system in good faith from legal action that may result from their efforts to comply. The government should also account for flexible employment arrangements and the rise of remote work by leveraging technology to modernize and streamline the Form I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification process and allow employers to use technology to verify identity.
- + **Expanding the Known Employer and Trusted Traveler Programs.** The Known Employer program streamlines the visa application process for reliable employers that have consistently demonstrated compliance and received visa approvals for their employees. Trusted Traveler Programs should do the same for qualified travelers to the United States. Expanding these programs will create greater efficiency and save the government, companies and individuals from expending unnecessary time and resources. Congress should also encourage inter-governmental data-sharing arrangements, like those in the Visa Waiver Program, that facilitate secure travel and legal border crossings.

Principle 2: The United States should expand legal opportunities for temporary workers of all skill levels to contribute to marketplace needs.

There are too few visas available to meet critical workforce gaps. An immigration system that supports our economy and benefits the American people should also adjust to our changing economy each year based on objective data. Static and arbitrary immigration quotas — last established in 1990 — prevent our economy from welcoming hardworking individuals who will make great contributions. Increasing the number of immigrants in needed fields also increases opportunities for Americans. For example, according to the [American Immigration Council](#), an increase in the share of H-1B visa holders within an occupation was associated with a decrease in the unemployment rate within that occupation. A modern U.S. immigration system should allow foreign-born workers to fill critical skills gaps that will fuel economic growth and help provide essential services for the American people.

Proposed solutions include:

- + **Reforming the current system for year-round jobs and creating a new visa category to help fill occupation shortages when U.S. unemployment is low.** Current law provides no visa category for foreign-born workers to work legally in the United States on a year-round basis in high-demand industries, such as health care, hospitality, agriculture and construction. Establishing a legal workable system to hire in these kinds of year-round industries when U.S. unemployment is low and creating a new visa category for these kinds of jobs would help fill critical staffing needs.
- + **Increasing work visa numbers for foreign workers to reflect current skills gaps and allow for adjustments based on the needs of the economy.** Congress must create a workable visa system with appropriate safeguards to maintain the integrity of employment-based immigration programs, where the number of foreign workers fluctuates based on economic growth and employment data. This also ensures that the American people have access to essential services, like patient care, in sectors facing significant workforce gaps.
- + **Allowing spouses of high-skilled visa holders to work.** Today, only a limited number of spouses of foreign workers may apply for U.S. work authorization. Other countries, such as Australia and Canada, allow spouses of highly skilled workers to accept employment. This would make it easier for the United States to attract high-skilled workers who have choices about where to locate themselves and their families.
- + **Increasing flexibility for and job portability of foreign workers.** It is often extremely difficult for temporary visa holders, particularly those who are pursuing green cards, to transition to permanent status, change positions within their companies or change employers altogether without jeopardizing their immigration status or their green card applications.

Principle 3: The United States should increase the number of skilled legal immigrants needed to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and contribute to the economy over the long term.

Immigrants to the United States start businesses that create jobs for Americans and drive innovations that deliver dividends across the economy. These innovators are a beneficial, needed complement to the U.S. workforce, not a replacement. An [American Immigration Council](#) report found that 45% of Fortune 500 companies in 2023 were founded by immigrants or their children, and those companies employ over 14.8 million people. The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) projects that STEM occupations will grow over two times faster than the total for all occupations by 2033. A [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) report noted that other countries are increasingly adapting their immigration systems to compete with the United States in attracting STEM talent.

U.S. immigration policy should reflect that our economy and communities have benefited from immigrants' knowledge, skills and hard work, particularly in STEM and other high-demand fields.

Proposed solutions include:

- + **Reducing the green card backlog for foreign-born professionals.** The current green card wait time for legal immigrants is untenable. Several reforms can be made to alleviate the harms caused by these backlogs and reduce the time these highly sought-after professionals wait to receive permanent status including: increasing annual limits and eliminating per-country limits on green cards; allowing temporary workers to remain in the United States if caught in the backlog; ensuring dependent children of high-skilled visa holders do not "age out" of status and are able to obtain a green card along with their family members; exempting family members from the annual employment-based green card cap; and exempting those who fill critical skills gaps.
- + **Removing barriers to retaining foreign-born graduates of U.S. colleges and universities, especially those with advanced STEM degrees.** American colleges and universities are among the best in the world and are incubators for domestic and foreign talent who will shape our future. A high percentage of STEM graduate students at U.S. universities are foreign-born, and it is important for U.S. economic and innovation leadership to be able to retain and employ them. A green card should accompany the diploma of vetted students with high-demand skills who want to work and stay in the United States. Programs that allow foreign students to work after graduating, like Optional Practical Training, should be preserved, and individuals with advanced STEM degrees from accredited U.S. universities should be exempted from the employment-based green card limit.
- + **Ensuring that any new method for allocating green cards, such as a points-based system, takes account of employment-based needs.** Any new system should complement — not replace — the existing system. Policymakers should consider the successes and failures of

other countries' immigration systems, take into account the viewpoints of all stakeholders, and recognize that U.S. employers are best positioned to identify skills gaps and select their workforces.

- + **Maximizing green card utilization.** Under current law, the government may issue only 140,000 employment-based green cards each year, and this number includes dependent family members of high-skilled workers. Given the overwhelming demand for this limited supply of green cards, it is critical that the government issue all green cards allocated by Congress each fiscal year. The immigration agencies should explore all options to ensure they do not go to waste.

Principle 4: The government should administer U.S. immigration laws in a timely, transparent and consistent manner.

Inconsistent application of our immigration laws deters investment in the United States and makes it more difficult for companies to plan their workforce needs. Case processing delays and shifting government standards are particularly difficult for foreign workers and their families going through the process.

Businesses are more likely to invest and grow in the United States if they know the government will administer immigration rules in an orderly manner and can plan around predictable adjudication timelines. Talented foreign workers and students are more likely to pursue opportunities here if they know the rules will not change while they go through the process and that government delays will not disrupt their status.

The United States will lose businesses and talent to other countries that offer a more predictable, transparent process — making the United States less competitive as a result.

Proposed solutions include:

- + **Reducing case processing times to reduce unnecessary costs for U.S. companies.** Unpredictable and lengthy case processing times create inefficiencies in the immigration system and force companies of all sizes to incur additional costs, impacting their ability to access visa programs. They harm foreign nationals and their families, particularly those who are waiting in the green card backlog. The government should adjudicate applications in a reasonable timeframe and expand opportunities for companies to request expedited processing.
- + **Considering public input on policy changes and providing notice.** The government should continue to follow the required procedures and provide adequate notice to the public of proposed immigration policy changes. Regulators should solicit and consider opinions and

feedback from the public before making and implementing policy changes. New policies should be applied prospectively, not retroactively, to those already under consideration for a change in legal status.

- + **Requiring the government to apply immigration policy in an orderly and consistent manner.** The law should be applied consistently with clearly defined criteria when reviewing the same types of applications. Inconsistency creates an unpredictable environment for companies and discourages talented workers and students from pursuing opportunities in America.
- + **Expanding digitization for immigration applications.** Currently, most immigration benefit applications (e.g., applications to sponsor an employee for a work visa) must be printed and mailed in, which forces the government and companies to incur unnecessary administrative costs and burdens. As it builds out its e-filing systems, the government should allow employers and individuals to utilize secure digital signatures and electronic approval notices.
- + **Enhancing U.S. Department of State and U.S. Consular Processes.** The government should ensure efficient and effective visa processing and background verification checks prior to U.S. travel. Congress should approve investments in technology to improve visa applicant checks, reduce case backlogs, and enable timely and predictable travel for businesses and individuals.

Principle 5: Congress should embrace a practical, bipartisan solution for Dreamers.

Hundreds of thousands of individuals were brought to the United States as minor children. According to [U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#) data, more than 530,000 individuals are currently in the United States under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). A [Coalition for the American Dream](#) report found that if DACA ended and work authorizations were not renewed, 440,000 workers could be forced out of the U.S. workforce over a period of two years. The report further found that ending DACA could shrink the U.S. economy by an estimated \$234 billion if DACA recipients are no longer working over their lifetimes.

Congress needs to address this population with fair and practical solutions.

Guiding principle for finding a solution:

- + **Policies should address childhood arrivals who were brought to the United States through no fault of their own and who have lived here a long time with no criminal records.** Congress should enact bipartisan legislation that serves American interests by allowing Dreamers, who have only known the United States as their home, to become lawful permanent residents.

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