

# Overview: Comprehensive Immigration Reform

**Tonight, President Bush Discussed His Vision For Comprehensive Immigration Reform.** The five clear objectives of comprehensive immigration reform are securing our borders, creating a temporary worker program, making it easier for employers to verify employment eligibility and continuing to hold them to account for the legal status of workers they hire, dealing with the millions of illegal immigrants who are already here, and honoring the great American tradition of the melting pot.

- **The President Believes America Can Be A Lawful Society And A Welcoming Society At The Same Time.** We will fix the problem of illegal immigration, and we will deliver a system that is secure, orderly, and fair.

## 1. The United States Must Secure Its Borders

**Securing Our Borders Is The Basic Responsibility Of A Sovereign Nation And An Urgent Requirement Of Our National Security.** President Bush's proposals to better secure our borders include increasing the number of Border Patrol agents, ending the practice of "catch and release" along the southern border, eliminating bureaucratic obstacles to returning illegal immigrants to their home countries, and sending National Guard members to the border for temporary assignment to assist the Border Patrol during the transition as new Border Patrol agents are added and new technology comes online.

**Since President Bush Took Office, We Have Increased Funding For Border Security By 66 Percent And Expanded The Border Patrol From About 9,000 To 12,000 Agents.** Over the past five years, we have apprehended and sent home more than 6 million people entering America illegally.

**By The End Of 2008, We Will Have Increased The Number Of Border Patrol Officers By An Additional 6,000.** When these new agents are deployed, we will have more than doubled the size of the Border Patrol during the President's Administration.

**We Launched The Secure Border Initiative, The Most Technologically Advanced Border Enforcement Initiative In American History.** We will construct high-tech fences in urban corridors and build new patrol roads and barriers in rural areas. We will employ motion sensors, infrared cameras, and unmanned aerial vehicles to detect and respond to illegal crossings.

**The President's Plan To Increase Border Security Will Take Time To Fully Implement, So The President Is Announcing Several Immediate Steps To Strengthen Border Enforcement During This Transition:**

- **In Coordination With Governors, Up To 6,000 National Guard Members Will Be Sent To Our Southern Border.** The Department of Homeland Security, and specifically the Border Patrol, will remain in the lead. The Guard, which will be deployed in shifts, will assist the Border Patrol by operating surveillance systems, analyzing intelligence, installing fences and vehicle barriers, building patrol roads, and providing training. Guard units will not be involved in direct law enforcement activities -- that duty will be done by the Border Patrol.
  - **This Initial Commitment Of Guard Members Would Last For One Year.** After that, the number of Guard forces will be reduced as new Border Patrol agents are added and new technologies come online. These 6,000 troops account for less than 2 percent of the total National Guard force of more than 440,000. We have enough National Guard members to secure our border while continuing to respond to natural disasters and to win the War on Terror.
  - **The United States Is Not Going To Militarize The Southern Border.** Mexico is our neighbor and friend. We will continue to work cooperatively to improve security on both sides of the border, confront common problems like drug trafficking and crime, and reduce illegal immigration.
- **We Will Increase Federal Funding For State And Local Authorities Assisting The Border Patrol On Targeted Enforcement Missions, And We Will Give Them The Specialized Training They Need To Help The Border Patrol And Other Federal Officers Apprehend And Detain Illegal Immigrants.**

**We Will Work To Ensure That Every Illegal Immigrant We Catch Crossing Our Southern Border Is Returned Home By Ending The Practice Of "Catch And Release,"** For many years, the government did not have enough space in our detention facilities to hold illegal immigrants while the legal process unfolded. Most were released back into society and asked to return for a court date, but did not show up when the date arrived.

- **To End "Catch And Release," We Will Continue Expanding The Number Of Beds In Our Detention Facilities And Continue Expediting The Removal Process To Cut The Average Deportation Time.** We are making it clear to foreign governments that they must accept back their citizens who violate our immigration laws. As a result of these actions, we have ended "catch and release" for illegal immigrants from some countries. The President will ask Congress for additional funding and legal authority to permanently end "catch and release" at the southern border once and for all.

## 2. To Secure Our Border, We Must Create A Temporary Worker Program

**President Bush Supports A Temporary Worker Program That Would Create A Legal Path For Foreign Workers To Enter Our Country In An Orderly Way, For A Limited Period Of Time.** This program would match willing foreign workers with willing American employers for jobs Americans are not doing. Every worker who applies for the program would be required to pass criminal background checks, and temporary workers must return to their home country at the conclusion of their stay.

- **A Temporary Worker Program Would Meet The Needs Of Our Economy, Ease The Financial Burden On State And Local Governments, And Add To Our Security.** A temporary worker program would give honest immigrants a way to provide for their families while respecting the law, would replace illegal workers with lawful taxpayers, and would enable us to make certain we know who is in our country and why they are here.

## 3. We Need To Hold Employers To Account For The Workers They Hire

**Comprehensive Immigration Reform Must Include A Tamper-Resistant Identification Card For Every Legal Foreign Worker So Businesses Can Verify The Legal Status Of Their Employees.** This card should use biometric technology, such as digital fingerprints, to make it tamper-proof. This would leave employers with no excuse for violating the law, and it would help us enforce the law.

## 4. We Must Deal With The Millions Of Illegal Immigrants Already Here

**The President Opposes Amnesty.** President Bush opposes giving illegal immigrants an automatic path to citizenship because it would be unfair to those who are here lawfully, would compromise the rule of law, and would invite further waves of illegal immigration. The President supports increasing the annual number of green cards that can lead to citizenship, but for the sake of justice and security, the President is firmly opposed to amnesty.

**President Bush Believes That Deporting Every Illegal Immigrant Is Neither Wise Nor Realistic.** There is a rational middle ground between granting an automatic path to citizenship for every illegal immigrant and a program of mass deportation.

**President Bush Believes Illegal Immigrants Who Want To Stay Should Have To Pay A Meaningful Penalty For Breaking The Law, Pay Their Taxes, Learn English, And Work In A Job For A Number Of Years.** The President also believes that there are differences between an illegal immigrant who crossed the border recently – and someone who has worked here for many years, and has a home, a family, and an otherwise clean record. Those who meet our conditions should be able to apply for citizenship – but approval will not be automatic, and they will have to wait in line behind those who played by the rules and followed the law.

## 5. We Must Honor The Great American Tradition Of The Melting Pot

**The Success Of Our Country Depends Upon Helping Newcomers Assimilate Into Our Society And Embrace Our Common Identity As Americans.** Americans are bound together by our shared ideals, an appreciation of our history, respect for the flag we fly, and an ability to speak and write the English language.

**The House And Senate Must Pass A Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill**

**All Elements Of This Problem Must Be Addressed Together.** The House has passed an immigration bill. The Senate should act by the end of this month – so that the House and Senate can work out their differences and send the President a comprehensive bill to sign.

**America Needs To Conduct This Debate In A Reasoned And Respectful Tone.** Feelings run deep on this issue – and as we work it out, all of us need to keep some things in mind. We cannot build a unified country by inciting people to anger, or playing on anyone's fears, or exploiting the issue of immigration for political gain. We must always remember that real lives will be affected by our debates and decisions, and that every human being has dignity and value no matter what their citizenship papers say.