

# WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

## HOUSE PARTY INSTRUCTIONS

The immigrant advocate community in West Michigan, working with a nationwide group Reform Immigration FOR America, has mobilized and is working to motivate the community to respond. As part of the effort, we have assembled education materials to share. We are reaching out to all members of the community to dispel the myths and misinformation being spread by opponents to comprehensive immigration reform.

We are pleased you're interested in doing a house party to help spread the word about how vital it is that we raise our voices to fix our broken immigration system.

A house party is easy to do! There are three main parts to the party, and each is very easy to complete with this guide:

**1. Food, fellowship, and introductions**

*Eat and mingle, short introductory activity, host's introduction*

**2. Video and discussion**

*Use the DVD in this packet and the enclosed Video Discussion Guide*

**3. Advocacy**

*Use the sample script, the provided supplemental information, and some time to practice with a partner, make phone calls, send faxes, emails, and text messages to voice your opinion to leaders; sign up to keep in touch with the movement*

**Can you handle hosting a house party? Definitely.**

**Here's what you need to know:**

- **Approximate time: 60 minutes (or more if you extend the discussion)**
- **Suggested group size: 10-12 friends**
- **Amount of prep work: 2 hours (mostly food preparation)**

In this packet, you'll find:

1. Instructions for Host
2. An Introductory Activity
3. A DVD
4. A Video Discussion Guide & Resource Packet
5. An Advocacy Guide
6. Sign-up Sheet for your guest's contact information

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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOST

### 1. Decide on a date and time, and send invitations.

- a. Invite each guest personally – the more personal the invitation, the more likely someone is to attend.
- b. Consider using [www.evite.com](http://www.evite.com) for an easy online invitation, or just send an email.
- c. Relax. Remember that you do not have to be an expert on the topic, and there are no “right answers.” Keep the *Learn the Issues* handout, a resource included in the Video Discussion Guide, nearby to handle questions that might be brought up by your invitees, prior to the event.
- d. Plan a Menu. If you’d like, encourage each guest (or choose a few good cooks!) to bring a snack to share with others. This will cut down on your preparation time.
- e. Instruct each guest to bring a cell phone (and consider inviting them to bring their lap top if you have wireless internet). They can send emails and faxes from their lap top during the advocacy portion. Have small papers with your wireless access code printed for each participant in this case.
- f. Register your house party with Ryan Bates so we can keep track of our organizing efforts in Michigan, [dasbates@gmail.com](mailto:dasbates@gmail.com).

2. **Go through this guide.** Do you understand each part, and feel comfortable leading it? Does the DVD work? Do you have questions? Feel free to contact us if so, [dasbates@gmail.com](mailto:dasbates@gmail.com).

3. **Prepare.** Make copies of the Introductory Activity and the Resource Packet for each guest as soon as you know how many will be attending. It’s a good idea to make a few extra copies, just in case someone brings a friend. Provide enough pens for each guest as well.

### Sample schedule:

**6:30 pm**      **Guests arrive.** Set out snacks and allow them to mingle until your group has all arrived.

**6:45 pm**      **Introductory Activity.** Hand out a copy of the Introduction Activity to each guest, give each a pen. **Simply explain:** *We are going to play a quick game to get to know one another and to get warmed up to start talking about the reason we’re all here: immigration. This is the same Bingo game you played growing up – but to fill in your square, you must get the signature of a person for whom the phrase in the box is true. For example, if I have a US*

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*visa right now, I can sign my name in that box on Rose's page. Then Rose just needs to have people sign the other boxes, and once she has all the boxes in a line (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal), she yells BINGO! And she's won. If no one yells bingo after five minutes, simply declare everyone a winner and move on.*

**6:50 pm** **Time to Share.** Give a brief introduction of yourself and why you've hosted this party. Here's an example, but make this part your own. Your guests will be most compelled to care about this issue if they know that you care, too.

**Example:** *I've invited you here to talk about an issue that is close to my heart: reforming our immigration system. Because I'm a nurse, I see people struggling every day because they are undocumented and don't have access to health insurance or to our public services. I used to think that "illegal immigrants" were a drain on our economy, but I've learned that this isn't the case. I also have made friends who are undocumented immigrants, and knowing people personally has changed the way I view this issue. Immigrants are real people to me, and they are suffering under a system that seems so illogical. I know that our country, which was founded on the principles of welcoming immigrants – which welcomed my own family – can do better than we are doing today. It's time to reform our system. I think the time is now, as congress is starting to make plans to change the laws. They need to hear from people like me, because I know they hear from people who are against immigrants every day. I hope you'll be convinced tonight to join me in advocating for the rights of immigrants here in Grand Rapids.*

**6:55 pm** **Show the video provided.**

**7:05 pm** **Discussion.** Lead the group in a discussion using the Video Discussion Guide provided. If they ask questions you don't know the answer to, feel free to say, *That's a great question, I don't know. But if you like, I'm sure we could find out!* Write the question down and email it to [dasbates@gmail.com](mailto:dasbates@gmail.com) and we can get back to that person.

**7:25 pm** **Make your Voice Count.** Using the Advocacy Guide in this packet, guide participants through the advocacy portion of the evening.

**Say something like:** *We know that our members of congress have heard a lot from anti-immigrant advocates. In 2006, Comprehensive Immigration Reform died because our leaders got up to 100 calls against reform for every one call they got in favor of reform. This can't happen again this year. We're going to take some time to write a script that feels natural to us, practice making a call, and then actually call our senators and congress people from our cell phones so that they know that West Michigan is for immigration reform. Don't be nervous! This is very easy. If you want, I can demonstrate what this will be like by calling first while you all watch.*

**7:30 pm** **Write sample scripts, practice with a partner.**

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**7:35 pm**     **Begin making phone calls.** Since it's evening, you're likely to get an answering machine. Be sure to leave a message!

Also have a station where people can send emails and faxes from a lap top. Log on to: [www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org](http://www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org) for an easy guide to sending an email.

**7:45 pm**     **Connect with RIFA.** Before guests leave, let them know that this is an ongoing effort, and they should keep up with the campaign. Pass around the email sign-up sheet. Ask guests to take out their cell phones and text "JUSTICE" to the number "69866" -- they'll get a text, or so, per month, letting them know how they can be advocates for Comprehensive Immigration Reform and giving them further instructions to act.

**Then thank them for their efforts. Together, we can change this unjust system!**

# WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

## AN INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

# IMMIGRATION BINGO

<b>Someone who has a US visa right now</b>	<b>Someone whose parents or grandparents immigrated to this country</b>	<b>Someone who has not traveled outside of the US</b>	<b>Someone who knows what color a "green card" is</b>
<b>Someone who knows what "coyote" signifies (not the animal!)</b>	<b>Someone who has petitioned for a visa in another country besides the US</b>	<b>Someone whose favorite food is not American food.</b>	<b>Someone who has ever traveled outside of the US without a passport</b>
<b>Someone who frequents a business owned by an immigrant.</b>	<b>Someone who speaks another language in addition to English</b>	<b>Someone who has lived abroad for a year or more.</b>	<b>Someone who has gone through immigration / customs at the airport</b>
<b>Someone who has a neighbor who is an immigrant</b>	<b>Someone who can name a famous immigrant from US history.</b>	<b>Someone who has called or emailed their member of congress to voice their opinion about an issue.</b>	<b>Someone who has a good friend who is not an American citizen.</b>

## VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

This Video Discussion Guide is to be used in conjunction with the DVD enclosed in this packet. You can choose to watch the 10-minute compilation or pick and choose individual stories to match your audience. If you do not have the DVD, the videos are available for viewing at [www.griid.org](http://www.griid.org). To help you we sorted the discussion guide into five sections:

- **Section 1 - COMMUNITY**
- **Section 2 - FAMILY**
- **Section 3 - EDUCATORS AND HEALTHCARE**
- **Section 4 - IMMIGRATION LAW**
- **Section 5 - ECONOMY**

We have proposed a series of questions to start dialogue. Remember, you do not have to be an expert on the topic, and there are no right answers. We recommend you view the video and select two (2) sections that speak to you and your guests (if you want to do more - consider hosting a second party). We also recommend you read through the resources and are prepared to separate myths from facts. This will help get you over stumbling blocks and help keep the conversation moving.

### Section 1 - COMMUNITY

#### **VIDEO CLIP/THEOLOGICAL/ - REV. STEVENSON**

Rev. Stevenson came from Los Angeles only 7 years ago. Los Angeles has a long history of immigrant settlement, but the current wave is settling in Midwest towns and cities.

- Are smaller towns/cities better or worse at assimilating new immigrants?
- Have you benefited from new immigrant businesses, relationships?

Rev. Stevenson believes welcoming the immigrant into our community is our civic/moral responsibility. This includes housing, education, healthcare, employment, driver's license, etc.

- Are there immigrant families in your neighborhood? Do they own their home?
- Do you or your children have friends who are recent immigrants?
- How would it affect our community if minimal social services were not offered to your immigrant neighbors and friends?

#### **RESOURCES INCLUDED IN THIS PACKET**

PUBLICATIONS BY:

**IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER**

“Economists and Other Experts Agree on the National Economic Benefit of Immigration”

“Why Don't They Just Get in Line”

PUBLICATIONS BY:

**JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS**

“Learn the Issues”

“Response to Undocumented Immigrants: The Arguments”

## WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Rev. Stevenson spoke about our country's tradition of International Mission.

- In our modern world, is it not a better use of resources to serve those who are in our midst?
- What is driving people to leave impoverished areas, especially Central America and Mexico?
- Should the US change its economic policy and lessen hardships realized in foreign lands, if they can reduce migration from those areas and keep families in their homelands?

### VIDEO CLIP /RACISM CENTER/ - BARRY

At his institute for racism, Barry follows the work of educators who uses current issues to promote racism or increase the ranks of racist groups. He speaks to the history of white supremacists influencing immigration policy in our country.

- Why are visa quotas for Central America, Mexico and Africa nations so low?
- Why do we welcome Cubans, but not Haitians?
- Fear and Messages of Protectionism are powerful tools. How do we get past this message and speak to the moral issues?
- Will you speak up when you hear someone making false statements or repeating racist statements?

### VIDEO CLIP /PASTOR/ - JERRY

Jerry speaks to responsibility of faith community to care for and stand with immigrants. The current immigration policy and public sentiment is very anti-immigrant.

- How do we reconcile our faith with the harshness and inhumanness of current immigration laws?
- How can we stop/temper the messages of hate that are broadcast on radio and television?
- How do we care for the families who suffer due to deportation of primary breadwinner? Lose employment because they do not have a green card? Live in fear that a mother or I be will be taken away at any time?
- Do you know your church or synagogue's stance on comprehensive immigration reform? Is it well known in your congregation? If not, how can you help to spread the word?

### VIDEO CLIP /LEGAL ASSISTANT/ - DIANE

Diane works in an immigration law office and prepares hardship applications for immigrants that are facing deportation. These documents tell how people we are seeking to deport are intertwined with US citizens. Diane has a special place in her heart for immigrants, because her parents and grandparents immigrated to this country and her Jewish faith tells her to welcome the stranger.

- Are we robbing our society of new energy and vibrancy that comes with the immigrants?
- Is it right to set such a high bar for hardship?
- Is it right to penalize immigrants who "age out" of benefits because DHS takes years to

- rule on their application?
- Is it moral to keep families apart?

## **Section 2 - FAMILY**

### **VIDEO CLIP/MOTHER/ - CINDY**

Cindy is married to an undocumented man and fears every day that he will be deported. This is the story of the mixed-status family (US Citizen married to an undocumented). Increased raids has taken fathers and mothers from their children and brought fear into those hiding in the shadows.

- How do these single parent families created by immigration enforcement actions strain our communities? Schools? Social Services?
- How does this fear affect the children's ability to learn? Behave in society?
- Will the anger of losing a parent cause these children to dropout? Join gangs? Become young parents?
- Visa backlogs and 1996 laws which bars entry for previous illegal crossing can cause spouses to remain out of the country for a long time (3 years, 10 years or more) in order to adjust status after marrying a US citizen? Is this fair to put this restriction on current immigrants?

Cindy shared her time in the hospital imagining what her experience would have been as an illegal immigrant?

- If you did not have status, who would you share this information with? Who would you trust?
- How has our recent crackdown on illegal immigrants affected your community? Your neighborhood schools?

### **VIDEO CLIP /VULNERABLE IMMIGRANT WOMAN/ - CRESENCIA**

Cresencia tells the story of a woman who has been abused by the father of her child and lives in poverty with her child in a foreign country.

- What are the realities that face immigrants in their homeland? What are they seeking for themselves and their families?
- How would you manage in a foreign land without the support of family, friends and neighbors?
- What would you sacrifice to support your child?
- Why is immigrant portrayed as "alien" or "criminal" rather than a vulnerable human seeking nothing more than seeking basic sustenance?
- Are churches and non-profits right in offering food assistance or other services?

**Section 3 - EDUCATORS AND HEALTHCARE**

**VIDEO CLIP /TEACHER/ - JEFF D.**

Jeff is a teacher in the Grand Rapid's Public School District and has observed the real effect of increased enforcement efforts, including the new driver's license restrictions.

- How do our current immigration policies affect learning in classrooms? Stability in schools?
- How does fear of officials affect parent participation in school activities? Communities?
- Jeff shared how parents have been demoralized and feel like they are "below all others in society". How does this affect how their children view society now and in the future?
- How does the fear of ICE affect how the parents and children view all officials?

**VIDEO CLIP /MENTAL HEALTH WORKER/ - KATHY S.**

Kathy is a mental health worker who also witnesses the real effect of the increased enforcement efforts, including the new driver's license restrictions. Taking away identification cards (driver's license and state I.D.) from parents places another obstacle in way of them accessing healthcare for their children.

- How can we provide services to children who are ill and have a right to healthcare and mental health services?
- Living with the fear of enforcement affects all members of the family? Is our current policy of enforcing immigration law in a "blanket" method (criminals and non-criminals alike) the right approach?
- Living in the shadows exacerbates existing mental illness issues and creates issues in otherwise healthy individuals. How will this affect our communities over the long run? How will we heal this divide when immigration reform is passed?

**VIDEO CLIP /HEALTHCARE WORKER/ - JUAN**

Juan spoke of language and cultural barriers that keep our community from fully serving the new immigrants. Often, they are employed in jobs that do not provide health insurance. Illegal immigrants do not seek medical treatment because they fear deportation.

- Do we have a responsibility to reach out and serve immigrant communities?
- How does fear of ICE affect a mother seeking care for herself or her sick child?
- Has the new driver license/ID law and lack of valid ID affected how your business operates or who accesses your services?

**Section 4 - IMMIGRATION LAW**

**VIDEO CLIP /JFON IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY/ - LIZ**

Liz provides immigration legal services to the immigrant community focusing on family-based and humanitarian applications. She meets the upstanding, lawful men and women who have lived and worked here so long (2 or more decades), they feel as if they are Americans. They want to “make it right” and apply for papers, but have no options.

- If current laws are enforced to the letter of the law, 11 to 12 million people will be deported. Do you think this is a practical solution?
- Do we really fear the mere presence of illegal immigrants?
- Should long-established, upstanding immigrants, with deep ties in our community be given a break or preference to adjust if laws are changed? What if one or more family members are a US Citizen?

**VIDEO CLIP /ACLU ATTORNEY/ - KATHY**

Kathy is an ACLU attorney studying the Department of Homeland Security and the enforcement arm, ICE. Immigrants ordered deported and those seeking asylum in the US are held in federal prisons, county jails and privately run jails with no “right to counsel.”

- Currently, our country does not provide legal counsel or protect due process for immigrants making an application or to fight deportation, and it is not economically viable for private attorneys to provide these services. Should immigrants have a right to attorney or due process in immigrations proceedings?
- Should special cases or those who meet a set requirement qualify for alternative detention options like supervised release?

**VIDEO CLIP /MEDIA EDUCATOR/ - JEFF S.**

Jeff believes our immigration policy needs to return to one which is welcoming and humane like when our country was founded. The illegal immigration problem goes beyond our borders and our policies need to look at economic conditions in all regions of the world that force migration.

- From the media coverage, one would assume that all illegal immigrants are Mexicans crossing the river and crawling under the fence. The reality is that 40% of illegal immigrants were processed and remain here on an expired visa. Why do our politicians and media dehumanize the issue and strip away the stories and the economic and moral context behind these actions?
- Is our country safer or more at risk with 11 to 12 million immigrants living in the shadows?
- Jeff served as a foster parent to an unaccompanied minor. Have you ever been in the position to assist someone with a USCIS application or Citizenship ceremony? How was your experience?

**Section 5 - ECONOMY**

**VIDEO CLIP /SETTLED IMMIGRANT/ - MARTIN**

Martin has been in the US for many years but still remembers his plight as a new immigrant and now finds his efforts to succeed are hindered by racism. He is proud of his contributions and other Mexican nationals who work so hard for so little.

- Why do we use words like “aliens” to describe immigrants?
- Why are immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Latin America, portrayed as criminals when studies show that crime rates in immigrant communities are lower than general population?
- Does an illegal crossing predict how the immigrant will behave once here?
- Did your ancestors come during the last major wave of immigration at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Did they suffer similarly when they arrived in the US? How did they manage?

**WMC**

**CIR**

## **Resource Packet**



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

*...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America*

April 28, 2009

## **Economists and Other Experts Agree on the National Economic Benefits of Immigration *Immigration Reform Cited as an Economic Necessity and a Net Gain***

“Our review of economic research finds immigrants not only help fuel the nation’s economic growth, but also have an overall positive effect on the income of native-born workers.”

~[Edward P. Lazear](#), **Former Chairman, White House Council of Economic Advisers**

“Economic recovery will happen more quickly if both high- and low-skill immigrants are permitted to enter the United States and work legally. A rational immigration policy would have numerous advantages: undocumented workers would pay taxes to federal and state governments rather than to grey-market check cashing services; payments for health care through insurance could be collected more easily, rather than burdening hospital emergency rooms with immigrants without health insurance; foreigners who want to work here could pay the government for visas rather than pay smugglers for unsafe, illicit transportation; and improvements in security. Legal visas and bank accounts would make it far easier to identify and track potential terrorists, dubious financial transactions, and those who simply overstay visas.”

~[Diana Furchtgott-Roth](#), **Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, and former Chief Economist at the U.S. Department of Labor**

“Legalization of the nation’s undocumented workers will provide a strong economic stimulus, and must be integrated as a necessary component of President Obama’s economic recovery strategy.... Moving workers out of a vulnerable underground status produces both short term and long term economic gains by strengthening the ability of working families to become more productive with higher levels of income, job generating consumption and increase their net contributions to tax revenues. Legalization also creates higher household investments in family wide education, boosting college-going rates among children, as well as creating very high rates of home ownership and small business investments that have historically been economic engines of job creation and community revitalization.”

~[Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda](#), **Executive Director, UCLA North American Integration and Development Center**

“My research, too, has explored immigrants’ potent contributions to U.S. innovation. More than half of Silicon Valley startups were founded by immigrants over the last decade. These immigrant-founded tech companies employed 450,000 workers and had sales of \$52 billion in 2005.”

~[Vivek Wadhwa](#), **Fellow with the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School, and Professor at the Pratt School of Engineering at Duke University**

“Immigrants and natives tend to differ in their educational attainment, skill sets, and occupations, and they perform jobs that often are interdependent. As a result, immigrants do not compete with the majority of natives for the same jobs. Rather, they ‘complement’ the native-born workforce—which increases the productivity, and therefore the wages, of natives... During the 1990-2004 period, the 90 percent of native-born workers with at least a high-school diploma experienced wage gains from immigration that ranged from 0.7 percent to 3.4 percent depending on education.”

~[Giovanni Peri](#), **Associate Professor of Economics, University of California, Davis**

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*THE IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER*

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[www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)

“Rounding up and deporting the millions of immigrants who are presently in the United States without legal authorization may make for a good sound bite, but it is not a viable solution. And if these immigrants are not given adequate incentive to ‘come out of the shadows’ to regularize their status, we will continue to have a large pool of unauthorized workers whom employers can exploit in order to drive down wages and other standards to the detriment of *all* workers. The large unauthorized workforce likewise has produced an underground economy, without basic protections afforded to U.S. workers, where employers often misclassify workers as independent contractors, thus avoiding payroll taxes and depriving federal, state, and local governments of additional revenue. An inclusive, practical, and swift adjustment-of-status program will raise labor standards for all workers.”

~[Ray Marshall](#), former Secretary of Labor

“The presence of such a large pool of illegal workers imposes an unnecessary drag on our economy. Many of those illegal workers are unable to bargain effectively with employers for a full market wage, relegating them to secondary markets where they are more likely to be paid in cash or hired through subcontractors. The result is submarket wages and submarket working conditions for undocumented workers and for legal immigrants and native-born workers who compete with them in the labor market... Comprehensive reform should also legalize the millions of workers currently in the United States without legal documentation. Many of these workers have lived and worked in the United States for several years. They have become valuable participants in their workplaces and their communities. They should be allowed and encouraged to come forward to be legalized and properly documented.”

~[Daniel Griswold](#), Director, CATO Institute Center for Trade Policy Studies

“...These problems [increased uncertainty, created disincentives for investing] are exaggerated and made worse if you’re undocumented. This reduced certainty causes people not to invest in their community, in their job, or in their skills. And we know that that investment—whether for documented or undocumented—is very critical. This type of [legalization] program, we know from experience and analysis, that it reduces that uncertainty and helps grow the economy... Enfranchised consumers—consumers who are part of the above-ground economy—are better consumers—meaning they are more willing to buy a home if they have certainty about their future to be able live in that neighborhood and live in this country. They are more likely to invest extra effort and money and time in their children and into things that help them be part of a community. Absent that kind of certainty about the future, the likelihood of that important category of consumers—12 million strong—spending more and growing the economy is reduced. And that is just bad economic strategy.”

~[Dan Siciliano](#), Executive Director, Program in Law, Economics, and Business at Stanford Law School

“We’ve heard some people asking whether this is the right time for immigration reform...reform that leads to a better regulated system can only be good in an economic downturn... People don’t just vanish, and just imagine what would be involved in driving out an estimated 10-12 million undocumented immigrants. There would be tremendous disruption in businesses around the nation... It’s very likely there’d be fewer jobs to go around because businesses would be terribly disrupted at a very precarious time... Probably more important, it’s just not real, mass deportation just isn’t going to happen... What is real is the idea of bringing undocumented immigrants into the above ground economy, making sure they pay taxes just like everyone else.”

~[David Dysegaard Kallick](#), Senior Fellow, Fiscal Policy Institute

“Several years ago I was convinced that immigrants significantly lower native wages... Subsequently my statistical analyses forced me to conclude otherwise... When one reviews the analyses the have been done by individuals who have no particular political axes to grind, who have been put through peer-review processes for publications by research institutions in academia, or in research periodicals of various disciplines, one overwhelmingly finds that the findings of immigrants’ effects on native employment and

wages are either small, nonexistent, and in some cases, are actually positive... Immigration reform is very likely to improve the conditions of not only immigrant workers, but also the native-born workers... To eliminate exploitation of the undocumented worker, in effect, eliminates—or at least minimizes to a great degree—exploitation in American labor markets for all of the participants. There would actually be a gain from immigration reform if there is a clear path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.”

~[Gerald Jaynes](#), **Professor of Economics and Professor of African-American Studies, Yale University**

“Still, an economic downturn is the right time to move on immigration, one of the few policy tools that could clearly boost growth... The pace of lower-skilled migration has slowed due to higher unemployment. This could make it less contentious to ease the path to legalization for the 12 million undocumented workers and their families in the U.S. It’s also a good time to ask why we turn away skilled workers, including the ones earning 60% of the advanced degrees in engineering at U.S. universities. It is worth pointing out the demographic shortfall: Immigrants are a smaller proportion of the U.S. population than in periods such as the late 1890s and 1910s, when immigrants gave the economy a jolt of growth... Immigrants have had a disproportionate role in innovation and technology. Companies founded by immigrants include Yahoo, eBay and Google. Half of Silicon Valley start-ups were founded by immigrants, up from 25% a decade ago. Some 40% of patents in the U.S. are awarded to immigrants. A recent study by the Kauffman Foundation found that immigrants are 50% likelier to start businesses than natives. Immigrant-founded technology firms employ 450,000 workers in the U.S. And according to the National Venture Capital Association, immigrants have started one quarter of all U.S. venture-backed firms.”

~[L. Gordon Crovitz](#), **former publisher of the *Wall Street Journal*, and executive vice-president of Dow Jones**

“Shortly after the November election, a few congressional offices privately acknowledged that it would be smart for the Obama administration to try to include pro-immigration provisions in the upcoming stimulus package. Some policy staffers were reading studies and hearing testimonies about how hardworking immigrants drive productivity and job creation across many different sectors of the economy... Only when undocumented immigrants have the ability to exercise complete workplace rights will they help exert upward pressure on wages and labor standards that will benefit other workers.”

~[Cristina Jiménez](#), **Immigration Policy Consultant, Drum Major Institute for Public Policy**

“More important, most undocumented workers are law-abiding, hardworking individuals who pay taxes, contribute to society, and are essential to many sectors of the U.S. economy. Any number of conditions can be set—they can be required to get to the back of the line, pay fines and back taxes, and learn English as conditions of legalization—but a clear, legal path to citizenship must be made available.”

~**International City/County Management Association**

“At a time when our financial-capital markets are still reeling from the credit bust, the human-capital market remains open for business. Fewer workers will be lured to the U.S. during a recession, but the ones who come will speed recovery. There are costs to immigration, especially in border states with generous welfare programs, but the overall benefit is akin to the advantages of free trade in goods and services.”

~[Wall Street Journal](#)

“Throughout our history as an immigrant nation, those who were already here have worried about the impact of newcomers. Yet, over time, immigrants have become part of a richer America, richer both economically and culturally... Overall, immigration has been a net gain for American citizens, though a modest one in proportion to the size of our 13 trillion-dollar economy... While a small percentage of native-born Americans may be harmed by immigration, vastly more Americans benefit from the

contributions that immigrants make to our economy, including lower consumer prices. As with trade in goods and services, the gains from immigration outweigh the losses. The effect of all immigration on low-skilled workers is very likely positive as many immigrants bring skills, capital, and entrepreneurship to the American economy... We must not forget that the gains to immigrants coming to the United States are immense. Immigration is the greatest anti-poverty program ever devised.”

~[Open letter](#) on immigration to President George Bush and Congress signed by over 450 American academics

“Dear America, please remember how you got to be the wealthiest country in history. It wasn’t through protectionism, or state-owned banks or fearing free trade. No, the formula was very simple: build this really flexible, really open economy, tolerate creative destruction so dead capital is quickly redeployed to better ideas and companies, pour into it the most diverse, smart and energetic immigrants from every corner of the world and then stir and repeat, stir and repeat, stir and repeat, stir and repeat.”

~[Thomas Friedman](#), *NY Times* Columnist

## Learn the Issues

### MYTHS

#### **IMMIGRANTS DON'T PAY TAXES**

Immigrants pay taxes, in the form of income, property, sales, and taxes at the federal and state level. As far as income tax payments go, sources vary in their accounts, but a range of studies find that immigrants pay between \$90 and \$140 billion a year in federal, state, and local taxes. Undocumented immigrants pay income taxes as well, as evidenced by the Social Security Administration's "suspense file" (taxes that cannot be matched to workers' names and social security numbers), which grew by \$20 billion between 1990 and 1998

(Source: [http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax\\_study.htm](http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax_study.htm))

#### **IMMIGRANTS COME HERE TO TAKE WELFARE**

Immigrants come to work and reunite with family members. Immigrant labor force participation is consistently higher than native-born, and immigrant workers make up a larger share of the U.S. labor force (12.4%) than they do the U.S. population (11.5%). Moreover, the ratio between immigrant use of public benefits and the amount of taxes they pay is consistently favorable to the U.S. In one estimate, immigrants earn about \$240 billion a year, pay about \$90 billion a year in taxes, and use about \$5 billion in public benefits. In another cut of the data, immigrant tax payments total \$20 to \$30 billion more than the amount of government services they use.

(Source: "Questioning Immigration Policy – Can We Afford to Open Our Arms?", Friends Committee on National Legislation Document #G-606-DOM, January 25, 1996. <http://www.fas.org/pub/gen/fcnl/immigra.html>)

#### **IMMIGRANTS SEND ALL THEIR MONEY BACK TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES**

In addition to the consumer spending of immigrant households, immigrants and their businesses contribute \$162 billion in tax revenue to U.S. federal, state, and local governments. While it is true that immigrants remit billions of dollars a year to their home countries, this is one of the most targeted and effective forms of direct foreign investment.

(Source: <http://www.cato.org/research/articles/griswold-020218.html>.)

#### **IMMIGRANTS TAKE JOBS AND OPPORTUNITY AWAY FROM AMERICANS**

The largest wave of immigration to the U.S. since the early 1900s coincided with our lowest national unemployment rate and fastest economic growth. Immigrant entrepreneurs create jobs for U.S. and foreign workers, and foreign-born students allow many U.S. graduate programs to keep their doors open. While there has been no comprehensive study done of immigrant-owned businesses, we have countless examples: in Silicon Valley, companies begun by Chinese and Indian immigrants generated more than \$19.5 billion in sales and nearly 73,000 jobs in 2000.

(Source: Richard Vedder, Lowell Gallaway, and Stephen Moore, Immigration and Unemployment: New Evidence, Alexis de Tocqueville Institution, Arlington, VA (Mar. 1994), p. 13.

#### **IMMIGRANTS ARE A DRAIN ON THE U.S. ECONOMY**

During the 1990s, half of all new workers were foreign-born, filling gaps left by native-born workers in both the high- and low-skill ends of the spectrum. Immigrants fill jobs in key sectors, start their own businesses, and contribute to a thriving economy. The net benefit of immigration to the U.S. is nearly \$10 billion annually. As Alan Greenspan points out, 70% of immigrants arrive in prime working age. That means we haven't spent a penny on their education, yet they are transplanted into our workforce and will contribute \$500 billion toward our social security system over the next 20 years

(Source: Andrew Sum, Mykhaylo Trubskyy, Ishwar Khatiwada, et al., Immigrant Workers in the New England Labor Market: Implications for Workforce Development Policy, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, Prepared for the New England Regional Office, the Employment and Training Administration, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Boston, Massachusetts, October 2002. <http://www.nupr.neu.edu/1102/immigration.PDF#search=center%20for%20labor%20market%20studies%20at%20Northeastern%20University%20studies>)

#### **IMMIGRANTS DON'T WANT TO LEARN ENGLISH OR BECOME AMERICANS**

Within ten years of arrival, more than 75% of immigrants speak English well; moreover, demand for English classes at the adult level far exceeds supply. Greater than 33% of immigrants are naturalized citizens; given increased immigration in the 1990s, this figure will rise as more legal permanent residents become eligible for naturalization in



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the coming years. The number of immigrants naturalizing spiked sharply after two events: enactment of immigration and welfare reform laws in 1996, and the terrorist attacks in 2001.

(Source: American Immigration Lawyers Association, "Myths & Facts in the Immigration Debate", 8/14/03. <http://www.aila.org/contentViewer.aspx?bc=17,142#section4>)

(Source: Simon Romero and Janet Elder, "Hispanics in the US Report Optimism" New York Times, (Aug. 6, 2003).

## **TODAY'S IMMIGRANTS ARE DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF 100 YEARS AGO**

The percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign-born now stands at 11.5%; in the early 20th century it was approximately 15%. Similar to accusations about today's immigrants, those of 100 years ago initially often settled in mono-ethnic neighborhoods, spoke their native languages, and built up newspapers and businesses that catered to their fellow émigrés. They also experienced the same types of discrimination that today's immigrants face, and integrated within American culture at a similar rate. If we view history objectively, we remember that every new wave of immigrants has been met with suspicion and doubt and yet, ultimately, every past wave of immigrants has been vindicated and saluted.

(Source: Census Data: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kprof00-us.pdf>; <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf> )

## **MOST IMMIGRANTS CROSS THE BORDER ILLEGALLY**

Around 75% of today's immigrants have legal permanent (immigrant) visas; of the 25% that are undocumented, 40% overstayed temporary (non-immigrant) visas.

(Source: Department of Homeland Security (<http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/statistics/index.htm>)

## **WEAK U.S. BORDER ENFORCEMENT HAS LEAD TO HIGH UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRATION**

From 1986 to 1998, the Border Patrol's budget increased six-fold and the number of agents stationed on our southwest border doubled to 8,500. The Border Patrol also toughened its enforcement strategy, heavily fortifying typical urban entry points and pushing migrants into dangerous desert areas, in hopes of deterring crossings. Instead, the undocumented immigrant population doubled in that timeframe, to 8 million—despite the legalization of nearly 3 million immigrants after the enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986. Insufficient legal avenues for immigrants to enter the U.S., compared with the number of jobs in need of workers, has significantly contributed to this current conundrum.

(Source: Immigration and Naturalization website: [http://www.ncjrs.org/ondcppubs/publications/enforce/border/ins\\_3.html](http://www.ncjrs.org/ondcppubs/publications/enforce/border/ins_3.html))

## **THE WAR ON TERRORISM CAN BE WON THROUGH IMMIGRATION RESTRICTIONS**

No security expert since September 11th, 2001 has said that restrictive immigration measures would have prevented the terrorist attacks—instead, the key is effective use of good intelligence. Most of the 9/11 hijackers were here on legal visas. Since 9/11, the myriad of measures targeting immigrants in the name of national security have netted no terrorism prosecutions. In fact, several of these measures could have the opposite effect and actually make us less safe, as targeted communities of immigrants are afraid to come forward with information.

(Source: Associated Press/Dow Jones Newswires, "US Senate Subcommittee Hears Immigration Testimony", Oct. 17, 2001.)

(Source: Cato Institute: "Don't Blame Immigrants for Terrorism", Daniel Griswold, Assoc. Director of Cato Institute's Center for Trade Policy Studies (see: <http://www.cato.org/dailys/10-23-01.html>)



# Response to Undocumented Immigration: The Arguments

**BACKGROUND:** According to recent estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, there are as many as 10-11 million undocumented immigrants currently in the United States. Two-three million are children. This estimate reflects an increase from 7.5 million projected by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000. About 70 percent of the undocumented immigrant population has resided in the country for five years or more. Approximately 450,000 new undocumented immigrants enter the United States each year.

As lawmakers and government officials consider various proposals designed to strengthen immigration law enforcement, one of the central issues in the immigration reform debate is how the United States should respond to the presence of the large undocumented

population in our nation. Some argue that increased enforcement will force this population to eventually leave the country, while others, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), believe that this population, which has by and large worked in the U.S. economy and otherwise abided by the law, should be given the opportunity to obtain permanent legal status through an “earned” legalization program that would require the applicant to undergo screenings and reviews and otherwise demonstrate eligibility. The following lists some of the arguments advanced by proponents of enforcement-only proposals, along with some of the counter-arguments made by those who advocate more comprehensive approaches to solving the immigration system’s deficiencies.

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## ARGUMENT:

**THEY BROKE THE LAW; THUS, THEY SHOULD NOT BE REWARDED BY ALLOWING THEM TO STAY.**

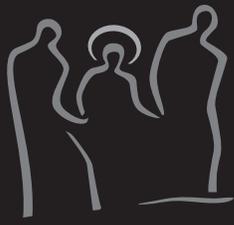
## RESPONSE:

Opponents of immigration use the argument, “they broke the law,” as a way of combating any proposals that provide legal status to undocumented immigrants. They also say that the United States should not be “rewarding lawbreakers,” and such phrases as “what part of illegal do you not understand?” Their intent is to stop any discussion of *why* these persons are outside the law, *what consequences or harm* come to the United States because of this circumstance, and whether the law they broke is just or in the best interest of the United States and should be changed. In using these arguments, they also imply that undocumented immigrants, being outside the law, are criminals.

The first response is to answer the *why* and *harm* questions. Migrants and their families, largely, enter the United States to survive by finding jobs. Once they cross the U.S.-Mexico border, 80 percent find employment. Their intent is not to *harm* the United States, but simply to work and, by doing so, they help our country and the economy. So, because they come here to work and they help our nation by doing so, we must ask whether current immigration law, which causes them to hide in the shadows and offers them no protections, is *just* in the first place.

Moreover, the availability of visas to enter the country through legal channels to either work or reunite with family members are severely limited and do not come close to meeting labor market demands. While the Church supports the rule of law, there are times when laws should be examined through a justice lens and be changed. In many ways, the current immigration system is broken and contributes to the abuse, exploitation, and even deaths of migrants who otherwise contribute their work and talents to our nation. While undocumented immigrants are indeed outside the law, and thus “break” the law, the unjust, outdated, and inadequate law also breaks them. Our nation cannot have it both ways.

Moreover, undocumented immigrants are not criminals—they have not broken a criminal law. They have only violated civil law, as we do when we violate a traffic ordinance. The United States Supreme Court has held that “a deportation proceeding is a purely civil action to determine the eligibility to remain in this country, not to punish an unlawful entry....The purpose of deportation is not to punish past transgressions, but to put an end to a continuing violation of immigration laws.”



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## **ARGUMENT:**

**MY RELATIVES (GRANDFATHER, GREAT-GRANDFATHER, ETC.) CAME HERE LEGALLY AND SO SHOULD THESE NEW IMMIGRANTS.**

## **RESPONSE:**

In the history of the United States, immigration law was developed relatively late, in the middle and late stages of the twentieth century. For the first 153 years of our nation, there was no general law barring entry into the United States, unless it was targeted to certain convicts or prostitutes. The Alien Sedition Act, passed early in our history, was seldom enforced. Entering the United States did not become a violation until Congress passed a law on March 4, 1929. Because of the lack of funding, Congress did not authorize or appropriate funds to enforce the law until the late 1940's.

The beginning of our current immigration code, the Immigration and Nationality Act, was enacted in 1965. The INA began imposing limits on categories of immigration and establishing an immigration enforcement regime which we adhere to, in part, today.

Today, our immigration system is ill-equipped to handle the current demand for immigrant labor in our country. According to the 2005 *Economic Report of the President*, "one of the most pervasive features of undocumented immigration is that it is overwhelmingly driven by supply and demand: immigrants want to work in the United States and American employers want to hire them." However, current legal limits on both temporary and permanent immigration remain largely unresponsive to changes in labor demand as a result of arbitrary numerical limits. Only 66,000 visas per year are available to low-skilled, nonagricultural workers to enter the country legally and work. The H-2A program for agricultural workers brings in about 30,000 workers a year, yet hundreds of thousands of jobs per year in these sectors are filled with immigrant labor, including undocumented immigrants.

## **ARGUMENT:**

**PROVIDING LEGAL STATUS TO UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS WILL PENALIZE IMMIGRANTS WHO PLAY BY THE RULES AND WAIT IN LINE.**

## **RESPONSE:**

The current proposal endorsed by the U.S. bishops, the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, requires that undocumented workers work six years before applying for permanent resident status. This places them "at the back of the line," behind immigrants who have petitioned for a green card through an employment-based or family-based petition. In addition, the proposal reduces backlogs in family categories so that waiting times are reduced to six months or less in all categories by 2011.

Furthermore, many of the undocumented who are here and immigrants waiting in line are the same people. Because of the long backlogs for family visas and other employment-related visas, many decide not to wait and enter through unauthorized means. By fixing the system, through expanding the number of visas available to work and reunite with families, the incentive to migrate without proper visas will be mitigated.



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America

## Why Don't They Just Get In Line? The Real Story of Getting a "Green Card" and Coming to the U.S. Legally

Many Americans wonder why undocumented immigrants do not come to the U.S. legally or simply "get in line" to get residency (a "green card"). In fact, the U.S. immigration system is grossly out of date and not keeping up with the demands of a growing and changing U.S. economy. Our laws have not been updated in nearly 20 years and there are only limited avenues for securing legal immigration status. The overly restrictive legal limits on green cards mean that virtually all undocumented immigrants have no alternative for legal entry to the U.S.

**There is no "line" for the vast majority of undocumented immigrants.** Accusations that immigrants in the U.S. illegally — numbering an estimated 12 million, and representing five to six percent of the U.S. workforce — should simply get in line miss the point: **There is no line and the "regular channels" do not include them.** If given a choice, [opinion surveys](#) of undocumented immigrants indicate that 98 percent would prefer to live and work legally in the U.S. and would do so if they could. However, most do not have the necessary family relationships to apply for legal entry, or, if they do, they face years or decades of waiting time for a visa. Those here illegally generally do not qualify as refugees unless they come from a handful of countries experiencing political unrest. Finally, most undocumented immigrants do not work in professions that qualify for a green card. The annual number of green cards for low-skilled workers is extraordinarily small and insufficient for America's enormous economy, which depends on high-, medium-, and low-skilled workers.

**The ways to "come legally" are restricted to certain categories of persons.** Getting a green card is generally limited to four different routes:

- **Employment Green Card Numbers Out of Synch with America's Needs:** An employer can request permission to bring in a qualified foreign worker in certain professions based on job skills and education level if the employer cannot find a qualified U.S. worker to take the job first. Most of the qualifying professions are high-skilled and require high levels of education, such as scientists, professors, and multinational executives. The number of green cards available for unskilled or low-skilled workers—hotel workers, landscapers, construction workers to name a few — is limited to **5,000 per year for the entire United States**. This grossly insufficient number of green cards in these types of jobs is the crux of the illegal immigration problem in the U.S.

The demand for workers in the service sectors has grown considerably while the supply of available U.S. workers has steadily diminished. Consider this: in 1960 approximately 50 percent of the U.S. workforce did not have a high school diploma. Today, it is approximately 12 percent. This means that fewer American workers are available for unskilled jobs. While the number of available workers for these jobs is dropping as Americans become better educated and have fewer children, the demand for workers in these industries is growing and expected to increase in coming years. Approximately 500,000 undocumented immigrants enter the U.S. each year — most coming to work and typically to do so in the service sector — yet there are only 5,000 green cards for unskilled workers. Until there are more legal avenues for employers to hire immigrant workers, illegal immigration will fill the gap and we will not gain the control over immigration that the American people demand.

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**A DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW FOUNDATION**

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[www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)

- ***Limited, Restricted, and Capped Family Immigration:*** A legal, qualified family member in the U.S. can seek permission (a petition) to bring in certain eligible foreign-born family members. U.S. citizens, for example, can petition for a green card for their spouses, parents, children, and siblings. Legal Permanent Residents (green card holders) can petition for their spouses and unmarried children, provided they meet other eligibility requirements. In all cases, the legal resident or U.S. citizen family member must demonstrate an income level above the poverty line and legally commit to support the family member they are seeking to bring to the U.S. Finally, in most cases, the new immigrant is ineligible for most federal benefits or services until they have worked in the U.S. for 10 years.

While the requirements are largely reasonable, the limitations on the number of total green cards are not. There are numerical limits on most family categories, with demand typically higher than the number of available green cards. This results in significant backlogs for most family members hoping to enter the U.S. legally, with some immigrants from some countries waiting decades for entry. For example, an immigrant residing in the U.S. legally with a green card must wait at least five years to receive a green card for her minor child. U.S. citizens must wait 16 years for a green card for a married son or daughter if they are coming from Mexico. While U.S. citizens and Legal Permanent Residents wait their turn to get a green card for their family member, it is nearly impossible for that family member to receive permission to even visit the U.S. Mothers, fathers and children, therefore, face years of separation or they may decide to risk breaking the law by entering illegally. Doing so, however, makes their chances at eventually receiving green cards even more distant and unlikely.

- ***(Some) Political Refugees, Yes. But Economic Refugees, No.:*** Persons who can prove a “well-founded fear of persecution” may in some cases be granted political asylum or refugee status. However, the burden of proof is high and the process is rigorous. They must prove that any harm that came to them is based on “race, religion, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, or national origin.” Even if they can meet this requirement, they are subject to numerical limits before they may get their residency, typically after a substantial waiting period. An immigrant does not qualify as a refugee because of poverty or difficult economic conditions in their home country.
- ***Limited Lottery for Certain Countries:*** The annual Diversity Visa program makes 55,000 green cards available to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. People from Mexico, China, the Philippines, India, and other countries with higher levels of immigration to the U.S. are not eligible. To qualify, applicants must have a high school education and two years of job experience. Since each year millions of people around the world apply, the chances of winning a green card are low.

March 2008  
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 202-742-5618

**ADVOCACY GUIDE - MAKING YOUR VOICE COUNT**

One of the main shortcomings in our work to pass compassionate immigration reform in 2007 was that members of Congress were hearing primarily from those who opposed comprehensive reform. In fact, some staff members estimated the ratio was 10 anti-immigrant calls for every pro-immigrant call! Nearly every poll shows restrictionists to be in the minority, but they have been loud, vocal, and organized. Consequently, it is all the more imperative that our elected officials hear from the majority in the faith community who support humane, compassionate, and sensible reform.

If we hope to pass strong legislation, the groundwork must be laid now. The immigrant advocate community can provide leadership and encouragement to our elected officials by prioritizing this agenda and making clear that we stand behind them. It is important to tell our elected officials that we support comprehensive immigration reform more than ever and to educate them about what elements we insist be included in any acceptable comprehensive immigration bill. There are many ways to get this message to your elected officials, but nothing is better than simply telling them directly!

*– Adapted from resources by Sojourners and Justice for Immigrants.*

**COMMUNICATING TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION**

Communicating with your members of Congress and administration officials is the most important advocacy step you can take. It takes just minutes to pick up the phone, put pen to paper, or log onto e-mail and let your representatives in Washington, D.C., know how you feel about the issue you care about. While this communication is often used to ask them to support policy or defeat harmful legislation, also remember to thank legislators when they act on your wishes or take a position you agree with. The committee with jurisdiction over many immigration issues is the Judiciary Committee (in both the House and Senate) and, by extension, the Immigration Subcommittee of the Judiciary.

**Calling your Member of Congress**

Sen. Carl Levin	Local: 456-2531	or	DC(202) 224-6221
Sen. Debbie Stabenow	Local: 975-0052	or	DC(202) 224-4822
Rep. Vern Ehlers (District 3)	Local: 451-8383	or	DC(202) 225-3831
Rep. Pete Hoekstra (District 2)	Local: (616)395-0271	or	DC(202) 225-4401

*If you simply want to express your opinion about how you want your Congressperson to vote on a bill:*

- Identify yourself to the person who answers the phone
- Say that you are a constituent
- Express your position on the bill

## WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

### *If you want to have a conversation about a bill or issue*

- Ask to speak with the staff member who works on immigration issues.
- Identify yourself, state that you are a constituent and name any affiliations
- Identify the bill or issue you wish to address: HR \_\_\_\_\_ or Senate Bill \_\_\_\_\_.
- State your position and how you want your Congressperson to vote.
- Mention examples from your personal experience
  - e.g. One of my neighbors has waited 5 years to rejoin his family....
  - e.g. I am a teacher and many of my US citizen students have one citizen parent and the other undocumented. Everyday he/she cannot focus at school because he/she fears that mom/dad will be picked up in a raid and not be there when they get home.
- Ask what your Congressperson's position is on the issue.
- Offer to provide additional information in support of your position.
- Thank the person for considering your view.

### **SAMPLE TELEPHONE LOBBYING SCRIPT – IN SUPPORT**

*"Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a constituent from (Grand Rapids/West Michigan). May I speak to the person working on immigration issues?" (Note the name of this person for your next call)*

*"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a constituent from (Grand Rapids/West Michigan). I am also a member of \_\_\_\_\_ (pick from list below-optional). I'm calling in regard to Comprehensive Immigration Reform and HR \_\_\_\_\_ or Senate Bill \_\_\_\_\_.* Are you familiar with this bill?"

*"Great. I believe that this legislation benefits immigrant families and our community and I urge your support"*

**-or-**

*"Okay, well let me tell you about this bill. It will \_\_\_\_\_"*

*"Does the Rep/Senator support this bill? Will the Rep/Senator be a co-sponsor of the bill? Is your office working to get other Senators to co-sponsor or support the bill? What could we do to help gain more support for it?"*

*"I would appreciate the Senator's support of this bill."*

**-or-**

*"Is there something specific the Senator objects to? What information can I provide that would help the Senator consider my position on the bill?"*

*"Thank you for your time."*

## WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

### SAMPLE TELEPHONE LOBBYING SCRIPT – IN OPPOSITION

*“Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a constituent from (Grand Rapids/West Michigan). May I speak to the person working on immigration issues?” (Note the name of this person for your next call)*

*“Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m a constituent from (Grand Rapids/West Michigan). I am also a member of \_\_\_\_\_ (pick from list below-optional). I’m calling in regard HR \_\_\_\_\_ or Senate Bill \_\_\_\_\_. Are you familiar with this bill?”*

*“Great. I believe that this legislation will harm immigrant families and our communities and I urge you to oppose this bill.”*

**-or-**

*“Okay, well let me tell you about this bill. It will \_\_\_\_\_*

*“Does the Rep/Senator support this bill? Will the Rep/Senator be a co-sponsor of the bill? Is your office working to get other Senators to co-sponsor or support the bill? What could we do to help gain more support for it?”*

*“I urge the Senator to oppose this bill.”*

#### **List of Possible Agencies/Affiliations:**

West Michigan Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform  
Reform Immigration for America (RIFA)-Michigan  
Religious Affiliation  
Professional Affiliation  
Trade or Labor Unions  
NETWORK  
American Immigration Lawyers (AILA)  
Westside Immigration Advocates of Michigan (WIAM)

### USING THE INTERNET

Reform Immigration for America is the organizer for this House Party Event. Their website will fax your Rep/Senator with your contact information and personal statement.

Visit [www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org](http://www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org) .

The Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR) is a faith-based immigrant advocate site. They have created the Take Action Network, an easy to use website to respond to specific legislative actions. Visit [www.cirnnow.org](http://www.cirnnow.org).

### CELL PHONE NOTIFICATIONS

All you have to do is text “JUSTICE” or “JUSTICIA” to “69866” and you will be signed up. “JUSTICIA” will get you a response in Spanish; “JUSTICE” will get you a response in English.

## WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

### SNAIL-MAIL/LETTER-WRITING TIPS

- State your purpose for writing in the first sentence of the letter. For example: “As your constituent, I am writing to urge your support for increased funding for health care.”
- If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it. And make sure that you are referencing the correct legislation to the correct body of Congress. House bills are H.R. \_\_\_\_; Senate bills are designated as S. \_\_\_\_\_. It is also important to know the status of the bill.
- Be courteous.
- If appropriate, include personal information about why the issue matters to you to make your point.
- Address only one issue in each e-mail.
- Close your letter with a restatement of your purpose and indicate the response that you expect.
- You should fax the letter to the representative’s Washington, D.C., office and also fax and mail it to his or her closest district office. (Office addresses and fax numbers are available on each member’s Web page, found through [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)).

### WRITING A LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR OR OP-ED

Your words, stories, and personal experiences regarding immigration issues are the most effective and newsworthy articles.

- Start by crafting what you want your main message to be.
- Papers look for clear, concise, and passionate opinions.
  - Combine your personal stories with tangible facts on how you have seen a particular issue affect the community.
  - Identify who you are, why you are writing, what the issue is, how it affects the community, and what others can do about it.

## WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE CELL PHONE ACTION NETWORK ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

#### HOW DO PEOPLE SIGN UP?

All you have to do is text "JUSTICE" or "JUSTICIA" to "69866" and you will be signed up. "JUSTICIA" will get you a response in Spanish; "JUSTICE" will get you a response in English.

#### HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Standard text messaging costs from your phone carrier apply, but there is no additional cost to sign up.

#### WHAT WILL PEOPLE GET WHEN THEY SIGN UP?

You will get a message that asks for your email and zip code. Its very important to reply! We need your zip code so that we can send you the latest news on local events in your area and the information for your local elected official who can help make immigration reform a reality this year.

#### WHAT WILL PEOPLE BE EXPECTED TO DO AFTER THEY SIGN UP?

You will receive text messages when your phone calls to the White House and to Members of Congress are needed the most. You may be asked to call your Congressional Representative or one of your Senators. Sometimes, we will be directing calls to the leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties in Congress or to others.

#### HOW OFTEN WILL PEOPLE BE ASKED TO TAKE ACTION AFTER THEY SIGN UP?

We will only contact you when it is really important and your action will make the difference. For example, after the raid in Bellingham, Washington in February, because of responses from the cell phone action network, we pushed the White House and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano to announce an investigation of the raid! More rapid response like this will tell our Representatives and Senators that our communities are watching and we know what is going on AND we are taking action.

#### HOW WILL NAMES OR PHONE NUMBERS BE USED AFTER PEOPLE SIGN UP?

We contact you via text when we need you to take action. Watch for the text alert and be ready to make a call! We will not sell your name or number or give it out and it will only be used as part of the cell phone action network on immigration reform.

#### WHAT IF THEY DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH, CAN THEY STILL CALL THE WHITE HOUSE AND CONGRESS?

Yes, by texting "JUSTICIA" to "69866", you will receive instructions in Spanish. Even if you do not speak English or speak English well, your voice still counts. Some Senators and Representatives have staff members who speak Spanish, others do not, so if you can use English, you should to make sure the message comes through. But in any language, they will know you cared so much about immigration reform that you were willing to make a phone call and that is important.

#### WHAT IF THEY ARE NOT U.S. CITIZENS OR WHAT IF THEY ARE UNDOCUMENTED, CAN THEY STILL CALL THE WHITE HOUSE AND CONGRESS?

Citizens, non-citizens, and the undocumented can call. The main thing is you are signaling to your Congressional Representative or Senator that you care about reforming immigration.

## WEST MICHIGAN COALITION FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

### WHAT INFORMATION DO PEOPLE HAVE TO GIVE THE PERSON ON THE OTHER END OF THE PHONE WHEN THEY CALL THE WHITE HOUSE AND CONGRESS?

You are not required to give the person who answers the phone any information if you do not want to. They may ask for your name, address, or phone number, but you are allowed to give as much or as little information as you like or feel comfortable giving.

### WHAT IF THEIR CONGRESSMAN OR CONGRESSWOMAN ALREADY SUPPORTS IMMIGRATION REFORM? / WHAT IF THEIR CONGRESSMAN OR CONGRESSWOMAN ALREADY OPPOSES IMMIGRATION REFORM?

If your Congressional Representative is already a supporter, it is still helpful for them to hear how much people in their community support reform. Similarly, if they are an opponent of reform, they need to hear how much their community disagrees with them on their position. Sometimes, we may suggest you call a different Member of Congress, like a leader of the Democratic or Republican parties to register your opinion.

### WHAT OTHER ACTIONS CAN PEOPLE TAKE?

1. Get 10 of your friends to join the network!
2. Go to the website ([www.ReformImmigrationFORAmerica.org](http://www.ReformImmigrationFORAmerica.org)) for other activities and for information on local organizations that are active in the movement.
3. Update your Facebook web page status to say that you joined the network.

### WHERE SHOULD PEOPLE GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Go to: [www.reformimmigrationforAmerica.org](http://www.reformimmigrationforAmerica.org) for more information.

