



April 15, 2013

Dear Leader Reid, Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner, and Leader Pelosi:

We, state and local elected officials from 23 states and the District of Columbia and Young Elected Officials Action – a program of People For the American Way representing the interests of progressive elected officials ages 35 and under – write to urge you to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

Any comprehensive immigration reform legislation must provide broad legalization with a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, help our economy grow by expanding opportunities for legal immigration, keep families – including those led by LGBTQ people – together, afford the responsibilities and rights required for full integration into American society, protect rights and working conditions for all workers, and ensure that the federal government can adequately enforce immigration laws that protect American and immigrant workers and advance due process and fair treatment, without shifting the burden to states, towns, and businesses.

As state and local elected officials, we see firsthand the impact that a failing federal immigration system has on American communities. School board members face the challenge of ensuring that the children of undocumented parents have access to education and opportunity. City council members and mayors must ensure that all people in our communities – documented and undocumented – have the protection of and are treated fairly by law enforcement. State legislators, in the absence of federal guidance, must work to ensure that all residents of their states have access to education, law enforcement protection, and health and human services.

Too often, state and local elected officials are left picking up the pieces of a federal immigration system that does not recognize the reality that undocumented immigrants have already become members of our communities. They contribute to local economies and strengthen our social fabric. Yet our outdated immigration system is deterring many potential new immigrants we critically need to help grow our economy and keeping the 11 million undocumented immigrants currently within our borders from contributing fully to our nation. These Americans, two-thirds of whom have lived in the United States for at least a decade, often face barriers in meeting basic needs such as health insurance, or drivers' licenses, or feeling secure in reporting crimes to law enforcement. Providing a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants would be a boon to our local economies as immigrants previously kept in the shadows are able to more fully participate in our entrepreneurial system and invest in their children's future.

A broken immigration system undermines the efforts of state and local elected officials to serve our constituents through effective law enforcement, public safety, economic development, public health, and education. Congress must pass a comprehensive immigration reform package that acknowledges the contributions that immigrants are making across the country, helps local economies to grow and thrive, and allows undocumented immigrants and their children to come out of the shadows.

Sincerely,
YEO Action
People For the American Way

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