

White House Announces Plans For Immigration Reform
Obama Administration to Make Good on Promise to Fix Our Nation's Most Complex Problems

April 9, 2009

Washington, DC - *As the New York Times reported today, the Obama administration has reiterated its intention to tackle comprehensive immigration reform this year. Recent statements from Speaker Pelosi and Senator Reid have also signaled their support. Yet some observers had assumed that the promise President Obama made during his campaign to reform the dysfunctional U.S. immigration system during his first year in office would be sidelined by the current recession. But, as the White House made clear today, the President intends to make good on his promise. The following is a statement by Angela Kelley, Director of the Immigration Policy Center (IPC) in Washington, DC.*

"We applaud the White House, Senator Harry Reid, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi for their vision, leadership, and commitment to passing comprehensive and meaningful immigration reform this year. The United States, now more than ever, needs workable solutions that fix our broken immigration system, support our economic recovery, and allow honest and hardworking people to become lawful and contributing members of our society.

The White House said a key component of comprehensive immigration reform will be the creation of a pathway to legal status for the roughly 12 million undocumented immigrants now living in the United States. Although critics of reform often deride anything short of mass deportation as a blanket 'amnesty,' a well-tailored legalization program would, in fact, bring order and legality to bear on what is now a chaotic and unregulated situation. Moreover, legalization would not add new workers to a U.S. economy already reeling from high unemployment. Rather, it would give legal status, and the full protection of labor laws, to workers who are already here. Undocumented immigrants applying for legal status would not only have to register with the federal government, but would also have to meet a number of other requirements, including paying taxes, getting criminal background checks, learning English, and paying a fine.

In addition, comprehensive reform will have to address many of the other flaws and inequities within our immigration system. It will have to reduce the enormous backlog of applications for family reunification, which impose lengthy waiting times on individuals

abroad who are trying to rejoin their families in the United States. It will have to create smarter and more targeted enforcement mechanisms that find individuals who pose a danger to public safety or national security, rather than expending resources on chasing workers and breaking apart families. And it will have to consider appropriate legal limits on immigration that rise and fall with the labor needs of our economy, rather than arbitrary numerical caps that bear no relationship to labor demand.

The time is now to resolve this ongoing and complex problem. Fixing our immigration system is an important part of addressing our nation's economic, health care, and homeland security challenges. The White House has taken the first step today and we stand committed in supporting their efforts towards achieving sensible and comprehensive reform this year."

###