Many Americans are frustrated with our immigration policies. But research and experience show that it’s not enough to focus only on the problems with our current policies. We also need to paint a picture of what the country would look like with workable, commonsense policies in place. This document identifies solutions across a spectrum of issues relating to immigrants and immigration, reflecting the importance of addressing the problems with our immigration policies as broadly as possible.

Topline Message:
America deserves a commonsense immigration process, one that includes a roadmap for New Americans who aspire to be citizens. Everyone agrees that the current patchwork of policies and programs is mismanaged and broken and that it breaks up families. For those currently striving for citizenship, the existing maze of regulations provides no light at the end of the tunnel, because there’s often no line to get into for becoming a fully participating American. We need to create a commonsense immigration process that recognizes the hardships and contributions of people moving here, keeps families together in this country, and creates a clear roadmap to citizenship for New Americans who aspire to be citizens.

Solutions:

Develop a clear roadmap to citizenship

✓ Enact legislation that will provide a clear and accessible roadmap to citizenship for undocumented individuals already residing in the United States—including immigrants who were brought to this country as children—and will preserve and advance family reunification, protect the safety and rights of all workers, prohibit enforcement measures that violate due process, and provide for the full integration of New Americans into our society.
✓ Eliminate existing backlogs in family-based permanent (green card) visas by recapturing unused visas and increasing annual visa numbers.
✓ Provide safe, legal means for migration through points of entry.
✓ Increase the number of employment-based permanent visas to reflect market demand for sought-after skills and experience.
✓ Eliminate the existing three- and ten-year bars to admissibility.
What DHS should do: ✓ Expand regulations that allow only immediate relatives of U.S. citizens to file applications with USCIS for waivers of the three- and ten-year bars to admissibility based on being “unlawfully present” in the United States to include spouses and children of lawful permanent residents. This would enable such family members to process waiver applications before they depart from this country to apply for their immigrant (green card) visas at the U.S. Consulates in their home countries, thereby reducing the risk of long family separation.

Talking Points

- America deserves a commonsense immigration process, one that includes a clear roadmap for New Americans who aspire to be citizens. Only Congress can repair our broken immigration policies and create a truly workable system.
- Citizenship is the aspiration of most immigrants working here today, but there is currently no way to reach this goal for most of them. We must address our outdated policies that leave many workers and families behind, with no chance at full participation and contribution.

Examples of Social Media

Opportunity Agenda @oppagenda 20 Mar
America wants an #immigration process with a roadmap to citizenship now!

The Opportunity Agenda shared a link.
March 20
It’s not what you look like or where you were born that makes you American—it’s how you live your life and what you do that defines you here in this country. We want a commonsense immigration process with a roadmap to citizenship now!

The research cited in this document is current as of February 2013.
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