

# Legislative Priorities for Immigration Reform

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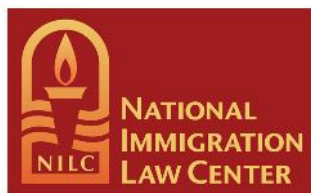
**T**he National Immigration Law Center calls for passage of broad and humane immigration reform legislation that **provides a clear roadmap to first-class citizenship for the 11 million aspiring Americans, including DREAMers, and makes it possible for them to fully integrate into the nation's social and economic fabric**, with all the rights and responsibilities entailed in full integration.

First-class citizenship should ensure that everyone living in the U.S. has access to economic supports, affordable health care, workers' rights, and the freedom to live free from fear of detention and deportation. Specifically, NILC urges Congress to enact immigration reform legislation that includes:

- **Roadmap to first-class citizenship for the 11 million aspiring Americans.** Immigration reform must include a clear and smooth road to full citizenship for those currently living under threat of deportation, as well as for those seeking to reunite with their families.
- **Access to quality health care and economic supports with no waiting periods.** Immigration reform must include immediate access to quality health care and economic supports. Waiting periods for health care were rejected in the debate on the Affordable Care Act and were removed for children and pregnant women under the option in the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act. Any health care or other safety-net services that are currently available regardless of immigration status must remain so.
- **The DREAM Act.** Immigration reform must include a process to allow those who were brought to the country as children, known as DREAMers, to begin the citizenship application process immediately. Any provisions pertaining specifically to legalization for DREAMers should allow people who are currently in school to qualify, not be restricted by age or education level, give states more freedom to offer in-state tuition, limit any criminal or conduct bars, and clarify that the often harsh immigration consequences for certain conduct do not apply to minors.
- **The POWER Act.** Too often, immigrant workers who stand up for their workplace rights face retaliation and deportation. This depresses working conditions for all workers and makes the job of labor enforcement agencies even harder. Immigration reform must include the Protect Our Workers from Exploitation and Retaliation Act (POWER Act), which expands the U visa to ensure protection for workers experiencing violations of their labor and civil rights and ensures that labor enforcement agencies can effectively enforce the law.
- **Reaffirmation of the federal government's responsibility for immigration detention and deportation policies.** In recent years a spate of state laws have attempted to wrest control from the federal government, while the federal government simultaneously has engaged state and local law enforcement officials in immigration enforcement through programs such as 287(g) and Secure Communities. It is critical that any immigration reform reaffirm the limited role of state and local law enforcement in immigration enforcement activity and end the 287(g) program.
- **Restoration of due process to our immigration policies.** Current immigration detention and deportation policies are separating families and devastating communities across the country. These policies and practices at the border and in the interior burden the judicial system and waste taxpayer money. Immigration reform must restore due process and halt the criminalization of immigrants by increasing the availability of meaningful waivers from deportation, limiting deportations that take place without judicial review, and stopping the expansion of the grounds of removability and inadmissibility, including the definition of "aggravated felony."
- **Due process and worker protections (E-Verify).** NILC continues to strongly oppose a federal requirement that all employers use E-Verify, because of the program's database error rates, lack of worker protections, lack of due process, insufficient privacy protections, and the significant amount of employer misuse of the program. Any mandatory electronic employment eligibility verification regime should, at a minimum, address these concerns.

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