

## **New Yorkers for Real Immigration Reform: Principles for Fair and Just Immigration Reform**

The current immigration system is outdated, fails to address America's economic and social needs, and focuses heavily on enforcement – ripping families apart, leaving children without parents, and shattering lives. At a time when our country is grappling with a weakened economy, and economists overwhelmingly agree that current immigration policy is bad for the economy, we can no longer afford to wait for Congress to pass immigration reform. Following are principles that can help build consensus among stakeholders who want a rational and forward-looking solution that puts America back on track toward long-term economic prosperity and social stability.

**Provide a path to citizenship.** Recognizing that the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants are critical to our economy and our society, it is time to finally pass a broad legalization program that provides a path to citizenship. Creating a path to citizenship for undocumented members of our communities would benefit immigrants and their families *and* U.S.-born workers by raising the floor for all workers.

**Focus on family unity.** Immigration reform will not be successful until we harmonize public policy with one of the main factors driving migration: family unity. Currently, families are separated by visa waiting periods and processing delays that can last decades. Immigration reform must increase the number of visas available for family members and eliminate bars to re-entry so that individuals who are eligible for a visa are not punished by being separated from their family for many years. Supporting family unity has to be comprehensive, regardless of sexual orientation.

**Meet our workforce needs.** Any solution must satisfy legitimate employer needs while respecting both immigrant and U.S.-born workers. We need visas for workers at all skill levels and a process to adjust for need. Increased visa numbers must go hand in hand with long-term investments in the U.S. workforce, including better education and job training opportunities. Reforms must uphold the wages and working conditions of all workers and ensure that immigrant workers in the formal and informal sectors have equal workplace rights and protections as well as a clear path to citizenship. We must reject faulty programs like “E-verify” that will harm the American economy and U.S. workers while doing little to end the hiring of undocumented workers.

**Enforce the rules fairly.** The U.S. Constitution guarantees due process for all people in this country. Our government, however, has not fulfilled that guarantee in its treatment of immigrants. Immigration enforcement, including detention and immigration court procedures, should adhere to basic due process and human rights standards. Any punishments or penalties in immigration law should be proportional to the immigration offense. Congress must restore basic civil liberties for all individuals in this country and our commitment to core American values of fairness and justice.

**Recognize Immigrants' Full Humanity and Eliminate Barriers to Full Participation.** Immigrants are more than just workers. Immigrants are neighbors, family members, students, members of our society, and an essential part of the future of America. Our immigration policies should provide immigrants with opportunities to learn English, naturalize, lead prosperous lives, engage in cultural expression, and receive equitable access to needed services and higher education.

**Restore Access to a Fair Day in Court.** We must uphold American values by ensuring that all people, no matter where they come from, are afforded fundamental rights, including the right to a fair day in court before being separated from family and community and deprived of liberty. Judicial discretion must be restored so that immigration judges are allowed to review all orders of deportation and consider positive factors in an immigrant's life that may warrant an exercise of discretion.