

I believe we must secure our international borders and decrease the number of individuals entering our country illegally. Focusing solely on border enforcement and employment verification, however, will not stop millions of people seeking well-paying jobs and the prospect of a better life in the United States.

The number of unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. has slowly decreased over the last decade. Yet the continuing presence of an overwhelmingly large population of unauthorized immigrants suggests that immigration control practices do not successfully address the weaker areas of unauthorized entry. Our legal immigration system, too, is in serious need of reform.

Comprehensive immigration reform must create a balance between ensuring the rule of law and recognition of the positive effect that immigrants have had on our national and local economies through increased consumption and job growth. We must stay true to our long history of providing hope and opportunity to individuals seeking legal entry into the U.S. True immigration reform must not only increase the number of border patrol agents and enhance criminal penalties for those who break the law, but also establish a legal process for those immigrants who have been working hard and contributing to our society – and who meet appropriate guidelines – to apply for, and potentially receive, some sort of legal status.

The legal process for unauthorized immigrants to gain permanent, lawful status in the U.S. would require immigrants to demonstrate the contribution they have made to their current community. Proof of employment over an extended period of time, payment of income taxes, and completed criminal and security background checks would all be necessary to apply for permanent status. This methodical approach to legalization would ensure that only those individuals who are truly committed to being constructive members of society would be able to gain legal status.

I will continue to support efforts that take a comprehensive approach to immigration by increasing the security of our borders while offering a realistic and fair strategy for helping the millions of hardworking immigrants who want to earn a chance at a better life. It is my strong belief that immigration reform must protect the interests of the U.S. first and foremost.

**More Information:**

[H.R. 4321, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act of 2009](#)

[H.R. 6497, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2010](#)

[H.R. 2892, extended the E-Verify program until September 30, 2012](#)