

# NAOC PRINCIPLES FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

## New Americans Opportunity Campaign

Immigration is a defining feature of America's history and of America's future. Unfortunately, America's current immigration system is broken. Instead of legal channels, legal immigration, and orderly, screened entry, the immigration system has fostered a black market characterized by a ballooning undocumented immigrant population, widespread use of fake documents, increasingly violent smuggling cartels, and widespread exploitation of undocumented workers. The American people are frustrated with their leaders on this issue and hunger for a solution that will work. They want neither open borders, nor closed borders, they want *smart* borders. The time has come for the President and Congress to work together to enact comprehensive legislation that rewards work, reunites families, restores the rule of law, reinforces our nation's security, respects the rights of U.S.-born and immigrant workers, and redeems the American Dream. The following organizations will evaluate legislative proposals for the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress based on the following six principles:

- 1) **Reform Must Be Comprehensive:** The proposal must simultaneously deal effectively with 1) undocumented immigrants working and living in the United States; 2) the future flow of workers and close family members; 3) the need for tailored, targeted, effective enforcement of more realistic policies; and 4) support for the successful integration of newcomers in the communities where they settle.
- 2) **Provide a Path to Citizenship:** Opportunities should be provided for undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. to receive work permits and travel permission and access educational opportunities once they undergo background and security checks. Those who want to settle in the United States should be eligible for permanent residence and citizenship.
- 3) **Protect Workers:** To replace the deadly, chaotic, and illegal flow of workers to jobs, there need to be wider legal channels so needed workers can be admitted legally to fill available jobs. To avoid the exploitation and abuses of flawed guestworkers programs, the nation needs a "break-the-mold" worker visa program that adequately protects the wages and working conditions of U.S. and immigrant workers. It should also allow workers to change jobs, meaningfully enforce both the program's rules and existing labor laws, protect law-abiding employers from unscrupulous competitors, and provide a path to permanent status.
- 4) **Reunite Families:** Immigration reform will not succeed if public policy does not recognize one of the main factors driving migration as well as one of America's most cherished values: family unity. Restrictive laws and bureaucratic delays too often undermine this cornerstone of our legal immigration system. Those waiting in line should have their admission expedited, and those admitted on work visas should be able to keep their nuclear families intact.
- 5) **Restore the Rule of Law and Enhance Security:** Enforcement only works when the law is realistic and enforceable. This can best be achieved by a comprehensive overhaul that combines reform – a path to permanent status for immigrants here and wider legal channels for those coming in the future – with effective enforcement. A smart enforcement regime should include smart inspections and screening practices, fair proceedings, efficient processing, as well as strategies that crack down on criminal smugglers, get tough with lawbreaking employers, and reduce illegality. Such a system will better enable the nation to know who is already here and who is coming in the future, and bring our system into line with our tradition as a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws.
- 6) **Promote Citizenship and Civic Participation and Help Local Communities:** Immigration to America works because newcomers are encouraged to become new Americans. It is time to renew our nation's commitment to the full integration of newcomers by providing adult immigrants with quality English instruction, promoting and preparing them for citizenship, and providing them with opportunities to move up the economic ladder. The system should also offer support to local communities working to welcome newcomers.