



## BARACK OBAMA: FIGHTING FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

*"In approaching immigration reform, I believe that we must enact tough, practical reforms. . . . We need stronger enforcement on the border and at the workplace. . . . But for reform to work, we also must respond to what pulls people to America. . . . Where we can reunite families, we should. Where we can bring in more foreign-born workers with the skills our economy needs, we should. . . . The time to fix our broken immigration system is now. It is critical that as we embark on this enormous venture to update our immigration system, it is fully reflective of the powerful tradition of immigration in this country and fully reflective of our values and ideals."*

[Obama Statement in U.S. Senate, 5/23/07]

### BARACK OBAMA ON IMMIGRATION

Barack Obama has played a leading role in crafting comprehensive immigration reform. Obama believes the immigration issue has been exploited by politicians to divide the nation rather than find real solutions. This divisiveness has allowed the illegal immigration problem to worsen, with borders that are less secure than ever and an economy that depends on millions of workers living in the shadows. Obama believes that our broken immigration system can only be fixed by putting politics aside and offering a complete solution that secures our border, enforces our laws and reaffirms our heritage as a nation of immigrants.

**Bring People Out of the Shadows:** America has always been a nation of immigrants. There are millions of people living in the shadows who would like to fully embrace our values and become full members of our democracy. For the millions living here illegally but otherwise playing by the rules, we must encourage them to come out of hiding and get right with the law. Barack Obama supports a system that allows undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, learn English, not violate the law, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens.

**Improve Our Immigration System:** Every year, a million people enter the country legally and another 500,000-800,000 people come illegally or illegally overstay their visas. The overwhelming majority of immigrants, both legal and undocumented, come to this country with the hope that hard work and sacrifice will secure a better life for their children. Barack Obama believes we must fix the dysfunctional bureaucracy to balance the needs of American workers and the U.S. economy. He also realizes the need to

increase the number of people we allow into the country legally to a level that keeps families together and meets the demand for jobs that employers cannot fill.

Obama joined Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) to introduce the Citizenship Promotion Act to ensure that immigration application fees are both reasonable and fair. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has decided to raise fees on applications to as much as \$2,400 for a family of four. Obama's bill reverses large fee increases for legal immigrants seeking to become citizens and provides grants to states to help promote citizenship. Another key choke point in the process to becoming a legal permanent resident or a U.S. citizen is the F.B.I. name/security check. Many law-abiding legal immigrants see their immigration applications delayed by months and often years as the overwhelmed F.B.I. completes their background checks. Obama introduced legislation that passed the Senate to improve the speed and accuracy of these background checks.

In the most recent immigration debate on the U.S. Senate floor, Obama fought to improve and pass a comprehensive bill. Obama introduced amendments to put greater emphasis on keeping immigrant families together and to revisit a controversial new points system that never received a proper public hearing. Obama will continue to work for a comprehensive bill that fixes our broken immigration system.

**Create Secure Borders:** Barack Obama wants to preserve the integrity of our borders. He supports additional personnel, infrastructure and technology on the border and at our ports of entry. Obama believes we need additional Customs and Border Protection agents equipped with better technology and real-time intelligence.

**Remove Incentives to Enter Illegally:** To remove incentives to enter the country illegally, we need to crack down on employers that hire undocumented immigrants. Barack Obama has championed a proposal with Senators Charles Grassley (R-IA), Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Max Baucus (D-MT) to create a new employment eligibility verification system so employers can verify that their employees are legally eligible to work in the U.S.

**Honor our Immigrant Troops:** About 69,300 foreign-born men and women serve in the U.S. armed forces, roughly 5 percent of the total active-duty force. Of those, 43 percent – 29,800 – are not U.S. citizens. The Pentagon says more than 100 immigrant soldiers have died in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Barack Obama believes that legal immigrants who have fought for us overseas should have expedited procedures towards citizenship.