



STATEMENT
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A CRITICAL FIRST STEP

WASHINGTON – The House Republican conference met in Cambridge, MD, today, and leadership released a set of principles to guide debate about immigration in the House. ImmigrationWorks USA president Tamar Jacoby made the following statement.

What happened today in Cambridge is a historic breakthrough: House Republican leadership declared its support for a series of critically needed immigration reforms, including granting legal status to millions of immigrants living and working in the U.S. illegally.

With this step, Speaker Boehner joins a long line of far-seeing Republicans, including Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, who've grasped that it's possible to be conservative *and* in favor of immigration reform – reform that serves America's interests by admitting the immigrants we want and need and preventing future illegal immigration.

The principles are sure to spark a vigorous debate in the House. First reactions will inevitably be mixed. But much of the disagreement is about leadership's timing and process. Strong voices from across the Republican spectrum agree with the fundamental point – the nation, and the GOP, need to act on immigration.

Is the proposal amnesty? Hardly. The plan being contemplated in the House would require unauthorized immigrants who come forward to admit their guilt, live on probation for many years, pay a series of fines and penalties and meet stringent conditions to maintain their legal status, including learning English and civics.

Among the most important of the principles released today: the commitment to create new, better, streamlined programs to admit foreign workers, high-skilled and low-skilled – workers who will grow U.S. businesses and contribute to the economy, creating jobs for American workers by filling gaps that would otherwise go unfilled at the top and bottom of the jobs pyramid.

Employers who hire less-skilled immigrants are looking to Congress to create a temporary worker program so they can fill jobs when there are no willing and able Americans. Without immigrant workers, the hospitality, construction, food processing and food service industries would all be severely hobbled, in some regions coming close to collapse. Employers across these sectors often search desperately for legal options, and they need help from Washington – additional lawful ways to meet their labor needs.

A new less-skilled worker visa program is also the key to better law enforcement. The best antidote to illegal immigration is a legal immigration system that works – and an effective guest worker program, along with enhanced border security and worksite enforcement, is necessary to prevent future illegal immigration.

The House Republican principles are a game changer. Now it's time to get the job done, passing immigration reform that works for America, bolstering our economy, reinforcing the rule of law and reasserting our heritage as a nation open and welcoming to immigrants.

ImmigrationWorks USA president Tamar Jacoby can be reached for comment at 917 912-2821.

ImmigrationWorks USA is a national federation of employers working to advance better immigration law. Our network links major corporations, trade associations and state-based coalitions of small to medium-sized business owners concerned that the broken immigration system is holding back the nation's economic growth. Their shared aim: legislation that brings America's annual legal intake of foreign workers more realistically into line with the country's labor needs.