

Immigration Reform and the State of the Union

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Washington D.C. - Tonight, President Barack Obama pressed the reset button and laid out his priorities for 2014—and, ultimately, the final leg of his presidency. During the State of the Union address, the President discussed the need to create jobs and greater opportunity for all. He also made it clear that immigration reform and economic recovery go hand-in-hand, and he expects the House of Representatives to make the next move on immigration reform. The President said:

“Finally, if we are serious about economic growth, it is time to heed the call of business leaders, labor leaders, faith leaders, and law enforcement – and fix our broken immigration system. Republicans and Democrats in the Senate have acted. I know that members of both parties in the House want to do the same. Independent economists say immigration reform will grow our economy and shrink our deficits by almost [\\$1 trillion](#) [1] in the next two decades. And for good reason: when people come here to fulfill their dreams – to study, invent, and contribute to our culture – they make our country a more attractive place for businesses to locate and create jobs for everyone. So let’s get immigration reform done this year.”

The President’s inclusion of immigration as a matter of economic necessity reinforces efforts over the last few years to redefine how we think about immigration reform. Immigrants create jobs as consumers and entrepreneurs and [spend](#) [2] their wages in U.S. businesses—buying food, clothes, appliances, cars, etc. This builds our economy as businesses [respond](#) [3] to the presence of these new workers and consumers by investing in new restaurants, stores, and production facilities. Also immigrants are [30 percent](#) [4] more likely than the native-born to start their own business. The end result is more jobs for more workers.

The President’s message on immigration extended beyond his speech. Immigrants and immigration activists attended as guests of Congress and the First Lady. Mrs. Obama invited two immigrants to attend as [her guests](#) [5]: Cristian Avila, a DREAMer and [DACA](#) [6] recipient who recently completed a [22-day fast](#) [7] on the National Mall in support of immigration reform and [Carlos Arredondo](#) [8], a Costa-Rican-American peace activist made famous by his heroic acts after the Boston Marathon bombing.

These guests remind us of the humanitarian nature of immigration reform that cannot, and should not be overlooked. As we grapple with efforts to create a more just and equal system in which everyone has a fair shot at economic prosperity, we cannot forget the need for a fair and just immigration system. Deportations that separate families, disrupt businesses, and destroy hopes and dreams help no one and ultimately do not reflect our tradition as a nation of immigrants.

Tonight, the President reiterated that he is prepared to use the authority of his office to push a range of initiatives forward. Thus, if 2014 is to truly be a year of action and opportunity, we encourage the president not only to support efforts to complete immigration reform, but to do all in his power to end needless costs—to families, to workers, and to the economy—of an immigration system that does not fulfill the promise of America.

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