I am 19 years old, and I was born in Los Angeles. I want you to hear my story, and I want this story to help you understand why immigration laws need to change now. In 2008, when I was 14, my mother was stopped at an immigration checkpoint while she was driving to pick me up at school. While I waited, and she didn’t come, I imagined she was working late or might’ve been caught in traffic due to a rainy afternoon. I finally went home and waited and worried. Two days passed by with no sign of her and then I finally got call from my mother. She was in Tijuana, and she told me she had gotten deported. There is no feeling that can compare to what I felt that night besides death. I felt totally empty and alone.”

— Eliza Morales, Congressional Briefing, Washington, D.C., December 12, 2012

Like so many other teenagers, Eliza struggled to keep her grades up, to fit in, to find the things in life that could affirm her sense of her potential and worth. A typical 14-year-old, she sometimes felt alone and isolated. But all of that was nothing compared to having her mother deported. Five years later, she longs to be reconnected with her mother, who is still in Tijuana, Mexico, without a way to return.

Eleven million people in the United States live in constant fear of deportation. These are hardworking people who love and care about their kids. Yet in the past two years, close to 205,000 parents of citizen children like Eliza were deported. As a result, many parents and children have been permanently separated.

Don’t think that they are the only people hurt by this. Among the 11 million are many people on whom we—U.S. citizens—count on every day to take care of our families. A recent study on domestic
work in the United States, “Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work,” found that most of the nannies, housekeepers, and caregivers for the elderly—people who keep modern American families functioning—are foreign born. What’s more, about half of them are undocumented. The study also found that 85 percent of abused domestic workers without documents endure these abusive situations specifically because they fear that their immigration status will be used against them.

But even those domestic workers who are lucky enough to find good employers are often still trapped in a life of poverty and fear. Consider Carmen, a live-in senior caregiver in California. Originally from the Philippines, she always believed that caregiving was her calling. For a mere $50 per day, Carmen helps to ensure that the elderly couple she cares for receives the support they need to live in the familiar surroundings of their home, with dignity. The couple treats Carmen like a daughter. Their children even call her for regular updates, counting on Carmen to manage a complex web of prescriptions and doctors. Women like Carmen provide critical support to millions of American families, and yet they live in constant fear of deportation and cannot support their own families under such conditions. Without a road map to citizenship, they are trapped in a state of vulnerability and poverty. And that poverty creates a downward gravitational pull on wages and business growth across our entire economy.

Today’s American family includes people from all different nationalities and traditions. We are already deeply connected across lines of race, class, and generation. We are interdependent, not only economically but also through our caring relationships, and this interdependence grows every year. As people live longer, we will only become more dependent on one another to ensure that our loved ones receive the care, support, and services they need. This growing interdependence is happening as we speak: The Baby Boomer generation is turning 65 at a rate of one person every eight seconds. Our nation is in serious need of people who are willing to provide the difficult and intimate labor of care. Currently, the
direct care workforce—which includes home health aides, personal care aides, certified nurse aides, and domestic workers, among others—is larger than any other occupational group in the country, and it is also the fastest-growing sector. That demand for care workers is growing faster than the number of individuals who are able and willing to fill these jobs. It is physically and emotionally exhausting labor with long hours and low pay—even if it was at least minimum wage, which it is currently not.

More and more this tremendous need is being met by immigrant workers from all over the world, including Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Their care work is crucial for ensuring the productivity of millions of women and men who have to leave their children and aging parents at home while they go to work. If that caring labor were not available, the ripple effects would hurt families and businesses alike. The Child Care Action Campaign found that companies in the United States lose more than $3 billion every year due to child-care-related absences alone. We simply cannot afford to leave our care workers behind. Even the proponents of anti-immigrant state legislation in Texas created an exception for domestic workers for fear of losing their caregivers and housekeepers to deportation.

No one who is responsible for caring for the most precious elements of our lives—our families and our homes—should be at risk of being torn from their own homes and families. To support these immigrant workers who provide the most important kind of support for our families, we need a road map to citizenship for undocumented people. All 11 million undocumented immigrants who live in the United States should have access to legal residency and a path to full citizenship. And we cannot close the door on the future; we need a proactive method for welcoming new immigrants who come to United States to improve the lives of their families and ultimately ours as well. We also need to raise workforce standards in the care industries and other industries populated by immigrant workers; this will, in turn, raise the quality of life for all Americans.

A broad and inclusive road map to citizenship for all is the cornerstone of a healthy, 21st-century American democracy and economy. We are fundamentally a multiracial society and as such we need immigration policies that reject “us versus them” approaches that treat immigrants as “foreigners” while seeing the rest of us as the “true” Americans. That kind of oppositional approach can never work because it is not how our lives and families operate in this day and age. We are all in this together. Instead, we need to support integration and connection between all Americans, including aspiring Americans. Our country is stronger when we include all people as full citizens. It’s not only demographic destiny; it’s the only way our families and our economy can thrive going forward.
Americans in Waiting: Immigration Reform for a Stronger Nation

BY VANESSA CÁRDENAS AND JEANNE BUTTERFIELD
Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa began working when he was 5 years old. Born to a poor family in Mexico, he came to the United States in 1987 as an undocumented immigrant at the age of 19. Once in the United States, he worked in a number of backbreaking jobs picking tomatoes and loading sulfur and fish lard onto railroad freight cars, but he decided that this was not what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. Eventually, Alfredo enrolled in community college to learn English, found mentors who supported him, and earned a scholarship to attend the University of California, Berkeley, where he pursued the natural sciences. After graduation, Alfredo was recruited by Harvard Medical School, and today Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa is a brain surgeon who directs the brain tumor program at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore.

Immigrants like Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa have been an enduring hallmark of the American experience. From the first English settlers in the 1600s to the subsequent waves of Polish, Germans, Italians, Chinese, and Mexicans, immigrants have always come to America to build a better life for themselves and their families. In the process they have contributed their talents and aspirations, and America has become better because of it.

Today’s immigrants hailing from Latin America, Asia, and Africa continue that rich legacy. As Congress considers granting a road map to citizenship
Economic benefits of legalizing undocumented immigrants

- Research from the Center for American Progress found that legalizing the United States’ undocumented immigrant population would add a cumulative $1.5 trillion to U.S. GDP over the next decade.¹

- Undocumented immigrants who earn legal status and citizenship produce and earn significantly more—25 percent more—than they do when they lack work authorization.²

- If undocumented immigrants are granted legal status in 2013 and gain citizenship five years thereafter, their increased earnings will lead them to contribute an additional $144 billion to the economy in taxes over 10 years—$91 billion to the federal government and $53 billion to state and local governments.³

- Legalization and citizenship will also add a cumulative $1.1 trillion to U.S. GDP over 10 years. The resulting productivity and wage gains ripple through the economy because immigrants are not just workers, they are also consumers and taxpayers.⁴

- Immigrant workers will spend their increased earnings on food, clothing, housing, cars, and computers, which helps stimulate demand, and will support an average of 159,000 new U.S. jobs every year.⁵

- Just passing the DREAM Act, to give undocumented youth a chance to gain legal status, would add $329 billion to the U.S. economy by 2030.⁶

for the 11 million undocumented immigrants among us, it would do well to recognize the vast potential that this new generation of Americans in waiting offers, and embrace the key role they play in continuing our unique American story, building our economy, and moving our communities forward.

Immigrants are key to the future economy

Immigrants are key to our economic future and serve as dynamic engines of economic vitality in communities large and small across the United
States. Numerous studies show that immigrants open up new businesses at a higher rate than the native-born population, comprise sizable portions of the workforce in various industries, and revitalize the cities and regions where they choose to settle.

Immigrants can be found in all sectors of the U.S. economy and fill vital roles in both highly skilled and lesser skilled occupations. They have a significant presence in the information-technology and high-tech-manufacturing industries, where they make up 23 percent of all workers.\(^8\) Similarly, recent research suggests that undocumented immigrants comprise at least half of all agricultural workers.\(^9\) High shares of immigrant workers are also found in private households (49 percent of all workers) and in the accommodation industry (31 percent of all workers), where they work as maids, nannies, personal caregivers, housekeepers, clerks, and more.\(^10\) Immigrant labor is also an increasingly important component of the agribusiness.\(^11\) Nearly half of all U.S. meat-processing industry employees are foreign born, and a similar proportion of crop-production workers are estimated to be foreign born. And

**Figure 1**

Selected industries of foreign vs. native born employment

41 percent of U.S. dairy workers are immigrants, according to a 2009 national survey sponsored by the National Milk Producers Federation.

Yet immigrants are not just laborers; these men and women are also the drivers of innovation and some of our country’s most active job creators. In 2011 one of every four new businesses was created by an immigrant entrepreneur. A 2012 Kauffman Foundation study found that immigrant business founders—individuals who are most likely to start companies in the innovation and manufacturing-related services field (45 percent of new startups) and in the software industry (22 percent of startups)—employed about 560,000 workers as of 2006, and generated an estimated $63 billion in sales from 2006 to 2012. The same report found that 24.3 percent of engineering and technology companies founded in the United States between 2006 and 2012 had at least one foreign-born founder.

According to the Partnership for a New American Economy, more than 40 percent of the companies on the Fortune 500 list in 2010 were founded by immigrants or their children—businesses employing more than 10 million people worldwide. For every high-skilled (H-1B) nonimmigrant visa issued to a foreign professional, five additional jobs are created. That’s because foreign workers often work in areas that promote job growth, such as the technology industry. The labor-intensive agricultural industry also creates economic prosperity, supporting three upstream jobs for every farm job in the sector. That is to say, when products are grown, harvested, transported, and processed, all jobs associated with these functions are exported through upstream jobs that support and are created by the growing of agricultural products. Immigrants at both the high-skilled and low-skilled end of the labor market simultaneously create and support jobs that generate significant growth to our economy and our labor force.

Moreover, several state studies show that immigrants are a net positive to their economies:

- In New Jersey, for example, immigrants are a substantial part of the overall workforce (28 percent) and bring in almost one-quarter of all earnings statewide—about $47 billion in revenue in 2006.

- Immigrants in Massachusetts are more likely to participate in the labor force, at almost 72 percent as opposed to 67 percent of native-born participants, filling jobs in the highly skilled technology and medical research fields, as well as in the health care and social assistance sector, such as home health aides and nursing assistants.

- In California immigrants make up 27.2 percent of the population yet start 44.6 percent of all new businesses in the state.

- In Virginia immigrants comprise 11 percent of the population, but are responsible for 17 percent of all entrepreneurial activity in the commonwealth.
Students Irvis Orozco, left, and Jorge Gutierrez hug outside the US Citizenship and Immigration Services at the Federal Building in Los Angeles Wednesday, Aug. 15, 2012.

AP PHOTO/DAMIAN DOVARGANES
Between 1990 and 2006 the U.S. metropolitan areas that experienced the fastest economic growth were those that also saw the largest increases in their immigrant labor force.\(^{22}\) Cities such as Phoenix, Arizona, and Dallas and Houston in Texas experienced high levels of economic growth due in large part to the contributions of immigrants in the workforce.\(^{23}\)

**Family visas are key to our economic future as well**

The United States derives the greatest economic and social benefits from immigration when the employment-based and family-based visa systems are functioning together in a well-balanced fashion. The United States needs workers to fill jobs but our laws must also ensure that there are pathways for U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents to reunite with their loved ones.

Coming to the United States to work is not the only way immigrants contribute to our economy. Family-based immigrants—those sponsored by family members who are citizens or permanent residents of the United States—make vital contributions to the U.S. economy as productive workers and entrepreneurs. What’s more, immigrants who come to the country on a family-based visa tend to move up the socioeconomic ladder faster than other groups. It has been shown that nonemployment-based immigration is associated with lower entry earnings, but higher earnings growth than employment-based immigration.\(^{24}\)

These contributions account for a significant portion of domestic economic growth, contribute to the well-being of the current and future labor force, and play a key role in business development and community improvement as immigrants are among the most upwardly mobile segments of the labor force.\(^{25}\) Indeed, the founders of major companies such as Yahoo! (Jerry Yang) and eBay (Pierre Omidyar) immigrated with their families as children to the United States and have added to the collective economic growth and innovation of this country.

Due to the overall lack of explicit public policies for the integration of new immigrants, families and ethnic communities have traditionally acted as powerful integrating institutions. Ethnic communities and families operate as sources of critical resources for new immigrants, including providing opportunities for employment, access to credit, and different kinds of support. In other words, when newcomers arrive in this country on a family-based visa, they have resources readily available to help them navigate the system and become employed or start their own businesses. In addition, family-based migrants are more likely to include a higher percentage of female migrants and are more likely to come from a more diverse set of countries than employment-based migrants.\(^{26}\)

**Immigrants and their children are central to our future workforce**

Immigrants are central not just in today’s economy but also in the future because of yet another
demographic trend that is upon us: our increasingly aging population. In the next few decades, 58.6 million job openings will be available because of workers retiring, dying, or changing occupations. It is estimated that between 2010 and 2030, more than 14 million Baby Boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964—are expected to retire. As these Baby Boomers, who are primarily native-born whites, leave the workforce, they will create a tidal wave of change in the composition of the labor force and the age distribution of the U.S. population when they die.

As more Baby Boomers exit the workforce, there is a greater need to address the impending worker shortage once older workers decide to retire. Immigrants will be key to filling the coming worker shortage. As it stands now, immigrants are fueling more than two-fifths of U.S. population growth. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, by the year 2050, immigrants and their U.S.-born children will make up virtually all (93 percent) of the growth of the working-age population in the United States. As native birth rates continue to decline and as the Baby Boom generation continues to retire, immigrants and their children—as workers, taxpayers, consumers, and entrepreneurs—will become even more critical to the economic vitality and global competitiveness of the United States for decades to come.
**Immigrants today integrate at the same rate as past waves of immigrants**

Just as they are making significant economic contributions, immigrants are also achieving societal and economic success. Research shows that today’s immigrants are integrating at the same pace or faster than did past generations and are doing as well as previous groups of immigrants. In terms of language proficiency, political participation, socioeconomic attainment, and social interaction, today’s U.S. immigrants are integrating faster now than in the last wave of mass immigration at the beginning of the 20th century. According to a recent Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data, second-generation Americans are substantially better off than the first generation on key measures of socioeconomic attainment, including having higher income levels and higher rates of college achievement. The children of immigrants, regardless of their ethno-racial group, tend to outperform their parents in educational attainment, occupational status, and wealth, thereby narrowing the gap in these areas with U.S.-born non-Hispanic whites.

A Center for American Progress report by leading demographers Dowell Myers and John Pitkin of the University of Southern California shows similar trends in other important socioeconomic areas. Myers’ study looked at census data from 1990 to 2012 and found that the longer immigrants live in the United States, the more they advance and the better they are integrated into our society on key indicators such as citizenship, homeownership, English language proficiency, job status, and earnings. According to his research, integration is occurring fastest in the areas of citizenship and homeownership as the rates of high school completion and earnings rise for immigrants. These data illustrate the extent to which immigrants are on track to achieve success in the future.

**Challenges in the current immigration system**

Even though immigrants are making significant economic contributions and integrating into American society, the U.S. immigration system is badly broken. Currently, there is a large segment of the population that lacks legal status to live in the United States, and the failure to provide a path to citizenship undermines our economy, keeps families apart, and hampers the process to integration.

**The current immigration system undermines our economy**

Failing to provide a road map to citizenship is hurting our nation’s economic potential. Numerous reports have provided evidence of the economic soundness of legalizing our undocumented population. A new analysis by the Center for American Progress shows that citizenship for undocumented immigrants would bring robust economic benefits. According to a report by economist Robert Lynch,
Welcoming Tennessee

Imagine if America rolled out the welcome mat for immigrants. That’s the idea behind the Welcoming Tennessee Initiative. Like many states, Tennessee had little experience with large-scale immigration until recently. Now it has the nation’s third-fastest-growing foreign-born population, with an immigrant workforce that has nearly doubled in the past decade. Welcoming Tennessee uses homespun strategies like community dinners and billboards to spread positive messages about immigrants and spur constructive conversation among old and new residents. The positive public discourse and community engagement have helped protect the state from the wave of anti-immigrant legislation that has swept through Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. For instance, pro-immigration voices—including business leaders, community organizers, and immigrants themselves—defeated an “English-Only” referendum in Nashville in 2009, on economic as well as moral grounds. They have gone on to defeat state legislation for English-only driver’s license exams.

The initiative helped long-time residents and newcomers alike to recognize that equity and inclusion are essential for economic growth. The work inspired the 2010 documentary “Welcome to Shelbyville,” where locals initially reacted warily, and sometimes with open hostility, to the influx of Somali refugees working in a chicken processing plant. The film traces Welcoming Tennessee’s progress in fostering honest, respectful conversation starting in the town of 16,000. Even more, the success of the project has inspired a national movement. Welcoming America has 21 state affiliates and engaged 18,000 people in welcoming events in 2012.35

if undocumented immigrants were granted legal status and citizenship in 2013, total economic production in the United States would increase by $1.4 trillion cumulatively over the next 10 years.36

Contrary to common fears, immigrants are not frequently in direct competition with native-born American workers, in part because they tend to have different skill sets. Native-born American workers, for example, are likely to have much greater English-language skills than new immigrants, allowing native-born workers to access more skill-intensive jobs. Studies of the last large-scale legalization effort in 1986 found that legalization did not reduce wages for native-born American workers, and in some cases actually raised wages.37 Moreover, recent research on the effect of increases in immigration over the past few decades find little to no wage or
Jonad Luque, originally from Honduras, reads to his daughter, Jarlin, 5, in their home in Nashville, Tenn.

AP PHOTO/MARK HUMPHREY
employment effects. This analysis is consistent with a large and growing body of research on immigration and wages. An emerging consensus in the academic literature concludes that the wages of native-born workers, even low-skilled workers, are not significantly decreased by increases in immigration. In fact, immigration may very well increase their wages; the research suggests that the complementary effect may outweigh any impact from an increase in competition.

The American public is cognizant of the role that immigrants play in our economy. This is why when asked how the substantial population of undocumented people should be treated, the vast majority of Americans say that undocumented immigrants should be given a chance to get right with the law and earn their way to full legal status and citizenship. The majority of Americans—regardless of political affiliation—want a road map pointing the way to earned citizenship for our undocumented population.

What’s more, this consensus bridges all divides of race, religious preference, age, and political opinion. In further evidence of this broad support, traditional civil- and human-rights organizations such as the NAACP have joined with other national immigrant-rights organizations to call on Congress to advance federal immigration reform. When speaking about immigration policy during his 2013 State of Indian Nations address, National Congress of American Indians President Jefferson Keel said, “We firmly believe that the arc of justice must stretch from the First Americans, to the newest Americans.”

The current immigration system undermines families

The dysfunction that exists in having such a large unauthorized population also has a detrimental impact on families and communities. In the past five years, the United States has deported more than 1.5 million immigrants and several states have enacted policies that promote what restrictionists like to call “attrition through enforcement”—forcing people to “self-deport.” Self-deportation has been a resounding failure—as immigrants are not leaving the country even in the face of harsh laws—and is shattering families and driving undocumented immigrants further underground, undermining things like community policing efforts.

Most disheartening, though, is the number of U.S.-born children who have been left behind because their undocumented parents have been deported. Between July 1, 2010, and September 31, 2012, 204,810 deportations—nearly 23 percent of all deportations—were issued for parents with citizen children. According to the Applied Research Center, there are an estimated 5,100 citizen children of undocumented parents currently living in foster care because of their parents being detained or deported.
On top of separating families through deportation and detention, our family-visa system also contributes to family separations. Currently, spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents must wait at least two-and-a-half years to join their loved ones in the United States. What’s more, waiting times are much longer for other family members: Unmarried adult children must wait more than seven years to join their parent, and brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens from countries such as the Philippines could face waiting times that are decades long. Asian Americans are the most likely to have family members caught up in the visa backlogs. Although Asian Americans comprise almost 6 percent of the U.S. population, they sponsor more than a third of all family-based immigrants, and nearly half of the family members in the visa backlogs are relatives of Asian Americans.

Lack of access to language and civics programs prevents successful integration

Our country’s identity is shaped by the core values of equality, freedom, and opportunity.

Immigration and the process of integration constantly test and ultimately strengthen and deepen our commitment to those values. Instead of making it harder for our immigrants to be fully contributing members of our society, Americans must work toward ensuring that newcomers have access to programs—language and civic education—that facilitate their integration into our social and cultural fabric. Naturalization is the cornerstone of integration and the first formal step in democratic participation for new citizens, and it must be accessible and encouraged.

Yet there are a number of barriers to naturalization. Many immigrants are unaware of the benefits of naturalization, eligibility requirements, or how the naturalization process works. For those who wish to naturalize, accurate information can be hard to come by. While the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, or USCIS, provides helpful information, many low-income immigrants either do not know about this information or how to access it. In addition, the high costs associated with naturalization—$595 per application—test requirements, and the lengthy process for naturalizations are all deterrents. In 2010, according to the Department of Homeland Security, about 8 million legal permanent residents were eligible to apply but had not done so.

By the same token, the demand for English-language instruction by newcomers vastly outstrips the supply of teachers. Programs that were robust in the past have been decimated in the face of state fiscal crises. A Migration Policy Institute study from 2007 concluded that, “the need for English language and literacy instruction by the nation’s [legal permanent residents] and unauthorized immigrants dwarfs the scale and abilities of the current service system.” As programs are further scaled back, the ability to address the need for English instruction will depend on creative and bold public-private partnerships.
Haitian immigrant Jean Emy Pierre, center, head chef at Colors, a restaurant co-owned by a multinational immigrant staff, with his kitchen staff as they prepare for dinner customers in New York, Tuesday May 22, 2007.

AP PHOTOS/BEETO MATTHEWS
Naturalization and English acquisition are important milestones along the road in immigrants’ journey toward full political and economic membership in their host society. As such, the U.S. government should actively promote and support integration efforts that will smooth the way for people who have been and will continue to be vitally crucial to America’s future growth and prosperity.

**Immigration reform for a stronger nation**

The current immigration system is badly broken and undermines our economy, family unity, and hampers the process of integration. Congress can and should enact policies that allow the United States to benefit from the creation of a road map to citizenship for the current population of undocumented immigrants living and working in our country. An immigration policy attuned to America’s 21st-century social and economic needs and realities will be one that welcomes immigrants, helps them become fully American, and by doing so strengthens both our families and our economy.

Common-sense solutions to solving our nation’s immigration problems are needed, and they include the following key policy reforms:

Research shows that undocumented immigrants who earn legal status and citizenship produce and earn significantly more—24 percent more—than they do when they lack work authorization.
Legalize the status of the 11 million undocumented “Americans in waiting” currently living and working in the United States by crafting a viable path to citizenship.

Designing and implementing a legalization program leading to eventual U.S. citizenship is essential to bringing our immigration system into the 21st century. The social and economic benefits that come with granting a road map to full citizenship will go a long way in fixing our nation’s deeply flawed immigration system. A path to citizenship leads to higher wages for naturalized immigrants both immediately and over the long term, and it raises the wages of the native born as well, because immigrants tend to be complementary workers who help make Americans more productive, which in turn expands the economy.53

Enact visa reforms that replace unauthorized immigration and excessive backlogs with a flexible framework that advances the nation’s dual interest in economic growth and family unity.

The demands of global competitiveness and a highly interconnected world require smarter channels for legal immigration into this country. Immigrants serve important roles, and family-based immigration has created the foundation for strong, entrepreneurial communities across the country. Employment-based immigration levels must not be pitted against family-based immigration. Target immigration levels should be adjusted to acknowledge that both family- and employment-based immigration are engines of economic dynamism. Creating a process to aggressively clear the multi-year backlogs in the family- and employment-based visa systems will preserve family unity and revise outdated numeric limitations.

Ensure smart immigration enforcement that respects the rule of law and due process.

Establishing smart enforcement policies and safeguards will provide meaningful reform. Restoring the rule of law will enhance smart workplace and border-enforcement initiatives with legal reforms that embrace 21st-century economic and social imperatives. Immigration reform must restore the integrity of our borders and the legality of our workforce. Smart immigration enforcement must also create a tough but realistic program to register undocumented immigrants, creating legal channels that are flexible, serve the U.S. interest, and curtail illegal immigration. We must develop a system that treats immigration as a national resource to be managed and embraced. Developing a smart border-technology design to disrupt the drug and human trafficking networks on both sides of our borders will be smart enforcement policy. This requires that we develop strong enforcement mechanisms at both the border and worksite that will expose employers who seek to hire undocumented workers. It also requires implementation of a secure
employment-verification system in conjunction with legalization of the current undocumented population.

Promote and ensure an inclusive American identity

The integration of large numbers of immigrants constantly tests and ultimately strengthens and deepens our national commitment to equality, freedom, and opportunity. The success of immigration reform over the long haul will therefore hinge on our ability to integrate current and future immigrants into the nation’s social and cultural fabric by effectively promoting English-language learning, civic education, and volunteerism. Providing additional resources to establish and coordinate integration programs throughout the country—in federal, state, and local entities—will promote the national interest in a civically engaged citizenry. Cultivating public-private partnerships and expanding the process of integration beyond arrival to the education and workplace arenas will allow us to reinforce our commitment to shared national values. The aggressive promotion of civic education will be critical to the success of comprehensive immigration reform efforts over the long
haul. The large numbers of immigrants settling in states and communities beyond traditional receiving regions means that the importance of a well-coordinated effort cannot be overstated.54

**Conclusion**

Immigration touches every person in America in some way. Everyone except Native Americans and those forcibly brought to the United States on slave ships has an immigrant story in their family history. Immigrants have played a significant role in building our nation and will continue to do so for years to come. The United States must embrace and harness the talents and contributions immigrants are poised to offer for the sake of our economy and our future competitiveness.

That is why it is imperative that Congress overhauls our antiquated and poorly functioning immigration system so that it serves the needs of a 21st-century economy while promoting an inclusive American identity. Immigrants are not strangers among us but are just like the generations of immigrants from earlier times. They are people like Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa, individuals who are seeking the American Dream and are ready to offer us their talents and commitment to the American ideals and values we all hold dear. As we move into an increasingly competitive global economy, we cannot afford to decline the gifts they offer. Surely, America needs them just as much as they need her.
Endnotes


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.


10 Singer, "Immigrant Workers in the U.S. Labor Force."


23 Ibid.

25 Ibid.


36 Lynch and Oakford, “The Economic Effects of Granting Legal Status and Citizenship to Undocumented Immigrants.”


52 Ibid.


Throughout our nation’s history, America has been enriched socially and economically by the presence and participation of immigrants. But today, numerous barriers relegate millions of immigrants into a social and economic underclass. Many immigrant communities lack programs and services that facilitate their integration into American society. Even more, the failure of immigration policy to offer a clear pathway to citizenship has resulted in a system that undermines the economy and family stability. Congress and the administration must work toward comprehensive immigration reform that meets the needs of the American economy while supporting the inclusion of all.

Facts at a glance

- **11 million**: The estimated number of undocumented immigrants in the United States

- **93 percent**: The share of growth of the U.S. working-age population by 2050 that will come from immigrants and their native-born children

- **24.3 percent**: The share of new engineering and technology companies from 2006 to 2012 that were created by U.S. immigrants
  - These businesses employed 560,000 workers and generated an estimated $63 billion in sales from 2006 to 2012

- **72 percent**: The share of Americans who favor a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented, including 60 percent of Republicans

- **$1.4 trillion**: How much higher gross domestic product in the United States would be if undocumented immigrants in the United States enjoyed all of the rights, privileges, and protections of native-born Americans through legal status and citizenship
  - Average U.S. income would grow an additional $791 billion, and federal, state, and local tax revenues would increase by $184 billion

- **$11.2 billion**: The amount that undocumented immigrants paid in state and local taxes alone in 2010, according to the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy
Call to action

To meet the social and economic needs of the 21st century, our nation must develop an immigration policy that welcomes immigrants, supports families, and strengthens our economy. Specifically, federal policymakers must take the following actions:

- Legalize the status of and offer a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants
- Enact visa reforms that replace unauthorized immigration and excessive backlogs with a flexible framework that advances the nation’s dual interest in economic growth and family unity
- Ensure smart immigration enforcement that respects the rule of law and due process
- Promote and ensure an inclusive American identity

Endnotes

4 Ibid.