

## PRESIDENT BUSH CALLS FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM



by

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In a major immigration speech, President Bush recently proposed what he calls a “comprehensive strategy to reform our immigration system.” Speaking in Arizona (a state which is along the U.S. border with Mexico), President Bush touted a 3-part process to reforming U.S. immigration laws: (1) securing our borders from illegal entries; (2) stronger enforcement of existing immigration laws; and (3) a “guest worker” program.

President Bush’s speech is significant in that it had a strong focus on enforcing existing immigration laws and stopping illegal entries at the southern border. This focus on enforcement is seen as important to many in the Republican party who do not want to reward illegal immigration. President Bush had previously proposed a “guest worker” program in early January 2004 (almost 2 years ago). While he continues to push for that program (which would allow certain illegal workers to gain temporary legal status), the President recognizes that Congress likely will not pass any major immigration reforms in favor of illegal aliens without also passing strong immigration measures to deter illegal immigration.

Following is a breakdown of the President’s 3-part strategy for comprehensive immigration reform:

### **1. Securing the Border**

President Bush wants to increase the number of border patrol agents and utilize greater technology to catch illegal aliens at the border. Once caught, the President wants the illegal entrants to be returned promptly to their home countries.

President Bush noted that, under current border policy, many illegal entrants who are caught and released immediately to the other side of the Mexican border. This “catch and release” policy results in many of the same illegal entrants trying over and over again until they make it across the border successfully. The President is pushing for the return of illegal Mexican entrants to the interior of Mexico (i.e., closer to their hometowns) in the hopes that this would decrease the chance of them trying to cross the border once again.

## 2. Worksite Enforcement

President Bush also called for greater enforcement of U.S. immigration laws with respect to the employment of illegal aliens. Back in the late 1980s the United States passed laws prohibiting the employment of illegal aliens. Under these laws, employers are required to verify that potential employees are authorized to work legally in the United States under the Form I-9 verification process (For more information on the I-9 verification process and to view the Form I-9, please visit [www.longchangonline.com](http://www.longchangonline.com)). Many employers, however, are unaware of this I-9 requirement and often do not verify their employees' work authorization. In recent years, the Department of Homeland Security has conducted raids at different worksites to catch illegal workers. Many of these raids have taken place at worksites where the U.S. government believes terrorists could target America (such as U.S. military bases, nuclear power plants, water treatment plants, etc.). President Bush wants to see greater enforcement of these existing laws relating to the hiring of illegal aliens. Again, the enforcement of existing laws is very important to many Republican legislators who do not want to pass new laws to benefit illegal aliens.

## 3. Guest Worker Program

In January 2004, President Bush first announced his "guest worker" program. In his speech in late November 2005, he again called for the passage of this "guest worker" program. President Bush described this program as follows: *"This program would create a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill jobs that Americans will not do. Workers would be able to register for legal status for a fixed period of time, and then be required to go home. This program would help meet the demands of a growing economy, and it would allow honest workers to provide for their families while respecting the law"*.

President Bush made very clear that this "guest worker" program is not an amnesty and will not automatically lead to citizenship. It is viewed as a way to become legal for a temporary period of time.

President Bush has advocated this "guest worker" program for almost 2 years now, but Congress has been unable to agree on an immigration plan which includes it. President Bush recognizes this and seems to have accepted the fact that, if this "guest worker" program has any chance of being made into law, it will most likely be part of a comprehensive immigration reform which includes strengthening the U.S. border and greater enforcement of existing immigration laws which prohibit illegal employment.

## Summary

President Bush's plan for comprehensive immigration reform comes at a critical time. There are many immigration proposals being discussed in Congress right now. In the past month, the U.S. Senate has introduced several immigration proposals (many of

which would have a positive impact on immigrants). While the Senate proposal is positive for immigrants, the U.S. House of Representatives has introduced enforcement-only legislation. Many of these proposals are expected to come up for a vote in Congress in early 2006. Stay tuned to [www.longchangoonline.com](http://www.longchangoonline.com) for updates on any new immigration laws.

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