

The 411 on Comprehensive Immigration Reform Proposed by the Senate

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The Bottom Line

The Senate immigration reform bill (S. 744, Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013) has the potential to be an historic civil rights milestone. It will provide millions of aspiring Americans with the opportunity to take that first step on a road to citizenship.

What does the Bill do?

- ✓ Lays out an agenda for increased border enforcement.
- ✓ Provides a pathway to legalization and ultimately citizenship for millions of aspiring Americans who are otherwise ineligible.
 - At first folks are eligible to become Registered Provisional Immigrants (RPI) → after 10 years, they may be eligible to become Legal Permanent Residents → 3 years later, they may be eligible to become U.S. citizens.
- ✓ Creates an expedited legalization process for some individuals, including farm workers and DREAM eligible students.
- ✓ Makes E-Verify mandatory
- ✓ Adjusts the types and numbers of VISAs available for future immigrants

The Best Parts of the Bill Still Have Room for Improvement

- ***Pathway to legalization and citizenship*** – This is a very, very important provision, but the process is too long (see below).
 - Some deported individuals will have access to re-enter the country
 - Deportations will stop for people who may be eligible for legalization and citizenship
- ***Justice System Improvements***
 - Immigration judges will have greater ability to exercise discretion on individual cases, and increased staff
 - Detention reforms include prompt bond hearings, alternatives to detention and better oversight of detention facilities – Still, more improvements are needed
 - The bill requires counsel be provided for some vulnerable populations, like those with mental disabilities and unaccompanied children – We'd like to see even stronger provisions on appointed counsel

The ACLU of Kentucky's Main Concerns with the Bill as Proposed

- ***Too many obstacles to legalization***
 - The **proposal excludes all individuals with felony convictions** and those with more than 3 misdemeanors from participation. *The roadmap to citizenship should not automatically exclude people based on old or minor crimes.*
 - Our most **vulnerable populations will be excluded**. In order to be eligible for RPI Status applicants must demonstrate steady employment and an income higher than the poverty level. In spite of the fact that RPIs are not eligible for public assistance, they must demonstrate they won't be likely to become a public charge.
- ***Unnecessary/Expensive Border Enforcement***
 - The roadmap to citizenship in S. 744 depends on enforcement triggers, such as arbitrary measures of enhanced border security. *Legalization processes should not have to wait.*
 - The bill calls on the government to spend billions of dollars in taxpayer money at the border on enhanced surveillance and expanded checkpoints, despite the fact that prior security benchmarks have already been met, and investments at our borders are at an **all-time high**.
- ***Mandatory E-Verify***
 - The bill requires a costly, insecure system to verify employment (E-Verify) that puts all American citizens at risk of losing their jobs due to errors in the system.
 - Mandating E-Verify raises significant privacy protection, and increases vulnerability to identity theft.
 - E-Verify has the potential to become a national ID system.

Meeting with a Legislator on CIR? Here's a Conversation Starter

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First Things First....

- Do your homework! Knowing where your legislator stands on the issue will help you frame the conversation, and pick which talking points you want to highlight.

Introduction

- Good [morning, afternoon, evening] everyone.
- I appreciate you taking the time to discuss Comprehensive Immigration Reform with me and members of your community.
- Before I begin talking about CIR in more detail, let me tell you a little bit about myself. [This is **THE MOST** important part of the conversation. Share your personal story, and reasons why you care about CIR]

The Rest of the Conversation

- Pick and choose talking points and information from the other side of the sheet, based on your meeting objectives.
- Relax! You are a constituent, not an immigration expert. If you don't know the answer to a question you may be asked, simply say you aren't sure and refer the legislator to the [ACLU's analysis of the bill](#). Make a note of the question and we can help you follow up with an answer.
- Before leaving be sure to thank the legislator for taking the time to meet, as well as his/her staff for setting the meeting. Ask about ways you can stay connected to the office. Is there a newsletter? Listserv? Get the information on how to sign-up and stay in contact.

Miscellaneous Talking Points You May Want to Sprinkle in to the Conversation

- The 2012 election was a mandate on comprehensive immigration reform.
- American history teaches us the dangerous consequences of creating an underclass of people living without the Constitution's full protections.
- Data from a new [poll](#) commissioned by CAMBIO, a new coalition for immigration reform, confirms what we have long known – that the American people agree wholeheartedly that all people in the U.S, including immigrants have fundamental rights under our constitution.
- Several other polls tell us the same thing, the American people support a practical pathway to citizenship
 - A CNN/ORC survey found that 84% of the public backs a path to citizenship for aspiring Americans.
- We must have transparency and accountability at our borders.

Talking Points for Areas You May Be Asked About

- *If you are asked whether legalization will lead to more people on our already stretched public assistance rolls...*
 - Immigrants who are able to adjust their status will not be eligible for most kinds of public assistance (welfare, food stamps, etc...) – These individuals will also not be eligible for Obamacare.

If you are asked whether CIR could make the U.S. vulnerable to more terror attacks like the Boston bombings...

- The process of creating common-sense immigration reform has been a decades-long battle. As leaders from both parties have asserted, from Senator Rubio to Senator Durbin to Rep. Paul Ryan, modernizing our immigration system by creating a roadmap to citizenship for aspiring Americans would not only be more humane and fair, but it would also improve our nation's security.
- We should remember that immigrants were injured in the attack and that immigrants and the sons and daughters of immigrants, helped identify the alleged perpetrators. We cannot afford to condemn groups based on their skin color, ethnicity, immigration status, national origin, ideology or religion. We still have to create an immigration process that is more just, more rational and more inclusive of people who seek to be part of the American dream.