

Name

Date

A Proposal for Immigration Reform

Most Americans agree that the United States is an exceptional nation—the greatest nation on earth. Most Americans agree that immigration has made our country a better, stronger, more prosperous nation. Why then are there such strongly held differing opinions on how open our borders should be?

Concerns about national security since September 11th have made Americans more aware of the need for a thorough examination of our immigration policy. Our country needs to maintain a strong economy and meet the challenges of a global marketplace and immigration policy is a significant contributor to these goals. To keep the United States strong and vital, our immigration policy need to address who should be our immigrants of the future and how we handle the illegal immigrants in our country today.

A complete policy on immigration must address the following three issues: how to select those immigrants who will contribute the most to our future economic needs, the need to maintain an international perspective on immigration, and how to handle the current illegal immigration population.

In the 19th century, large waves of immigrants came to the United States that had the skills and talents needed at that time. They built the railroads, canals, and infrastructure needed in a period of rapid expansion. These immigrants were largely unskilled but willing to perform hard physical labor. Our economic needs had changed and now the talents and skills needed have shifted from physical labor to technical expertise. For our future, our country needs more engineering, scientific, and other highly developed technical skills. Our immigration policy needs to allow for the selection of these types of individuals that will have immediate positive impact on our economy and ability to compete in a global market.

For several decades, our immigration policy has favored family reunification. On the surface, this may appear as a purely humanitarian goal, but it is more than that. Immigrant families have contributed to the growth of the United States economy by creating new ventures. These start-ups are often small businesses that employ other newly arrived family members. It is common for the next generation of these families to become fully integrated, contributing member in our society. Our immigration policy needs to identify family unification as an important contributor to the success inclusion of immigrants into our society.

A difficult but necessary consideration in our immigration policy centers on the issue of illegal immigrants. Poor economic conditions in their home country and a long mostly unguarded border provided conditions that allowed the creation of a large illegal immigrant population. Many illegal immigrants are now contributing members of our economy who have created families and lives in our country. They respect the laws of our

country and want to become citizens. Current immigration policy would use detention and deportation as solutions to this problem. The scale of this problem is too large for these methods to be effective. Our immigration policy need to first secure our national border and then to provide a path to legal status and citizenship for those who have led productive lives.

Although crafting a realistic and viable immigration policy is not a simple matter, changes need to be made to our current policy. These changes need to address the current illegal immigrant population and the factors used to select future immigrants. Nothing less than our future ability to compete globally is at stake. A comprehensive immigration policy that provides a talented and skilled workforce fully integrated into our American society will help us continue to be the greatest country on earth.