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UVa Miller Center Memo to President & Congress: Lawmakers Must Focus on Four Elements to Achieve Immigration Reform

Lawmakers must focus on four elements to resolve conflicting interests over immigration and achieve real reform, according to a new report prepared by the University of Virginia's Miller Center and sent to President Barack Obama and key members of Congress. Elements include more secure borders; interior enforcement, particularly at the workplace; temporary worker programs that match gaps in the job market; and some form of legalization for the millions of unauthorized immigrants in the United States.

Click [here](#) to read "The Way Forward on Immigration: A Memo to the President and the Congress."

The report is based on the Miller Center's multi-year Galbraith Initiative on Immigration, which assembled leading scholars, policymakers and practitioners from across the country representing different points of view and different prescriptions for addressing America's broken immigration system.

Participants included Alejandro Mayorkas, then director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; John Morton, then director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies; David A. Martin, professor of international law at the University of Virginia; and Muzaffar Chishti, director of the Migration Policy Institute at the New York University School of Law.

"That America's immigration system is broken is not in dispute. That Americans want it fixed is not in dispute. So Congress should not let its own disputes block the path to a solution. Lawmakers should get on their own path to citizenship, tone down the rhetoric, and use the legislative process to find success in a common cause," the report concludes.

Using the four elements as a framework, the report recommends that lawmakers:

- Recognize the failures of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, not look back and blame but focus forward on what is needed

- Acknowledge that the tools of border control are better today, such as the database tools and web communications that make port of entry monitoring and interior enforcement fast and reliable
- Build on proven systems such as Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and the United States Visitor and Immigration Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT), now the Office of Biometric Identity Management, to track visas
- Make e-verify mandatory
- Apply a reasonable standard of verification to border security to close the “trust gap” and win the confidence of the American people
- Don’t settle for an executive branch stipulation that the borders are tight, but don’t make accountability unachievable by imposing impossible standards and measurements of success
- Balance the resources allotted to border security and workplace enforcement
- Deny access across the border but also deny access to jobs. Longer, taller fences and more surveillance drones won’t overcome the attraction of the U.S. “jobs magnet.”
- Bring 11 million men, women, and children out of the shadows and into legal status, and establish appropriate, varying paths to American citizenship. Some, like the Dreamers, will be comparatively short. Some will take more than a decade of commitment. Some will fail. Some will be denied.

As part of the Galbraith Initiative, the Miller Center held several events, including a two-day conference on immigration politics and policies in Washington, D.C.; a colloquium on immigration federalism; forums with policymakers; and debates on immigration policy. For more on these events, including video, go to www.millercenter.org.

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