



**Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR) is the name given to a legislative strategy to fix America's terribly broken immigration system. As we see it, CIR's strategy has three key planks:**

- Toughen up on the border and on employers illegally hiring undocumented workers.
- Better manage the future flow of legal immigrants.
- Create legal status and a path to citizenship for those already here.

**First, Members of Congress must keep in mind that a clear and consistent majority of Americans support the strategy behind CIR.**

- Fixing the broken immigration system is a top-tier concern for a majority of Americans. It's not that Immigration is an issue at the forefront of voters' minds – it doesn't directly affect a lot of voters – but it has become a symbol to those outside the Beltway of how Washington doesn't work. It is an issue that frustrates a lot of voters, and they are looking for action.
- Polls performed over the last three or four years have consistently demonstrated that 55-75%, a clear majority, of Americans support CIR. Few blame the immigrants (only 3%).
- Providing a path to *citizenship* is preferred by voters to offering just "legal status" to the undocumented population.

**CIR Has Been Among the Most Bi-Partisan Pieces of Legislation in a Highly Partisan Age**

- CIR has been supported by a large and diverse bi-partisan coalition, with partners ranging from immigrant rights groups to the Chamber of Commerce, labor unions, high-tech and agricultural groups, the faith community, governors, mayors, sheriffs and Chiefs of Police across the country. In fact, CIR was one of the most bi-partisan bills of its era, attracting 62 votes in 2006 with the support of President Bush, John McCain, Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama.
- With a majority of Americans supporting CIR – 55%-75% **based on polls conducted in swing districts and states all over the country** – and a deep and broad bi-partisan coalition behind it, *comprehensive immigration Reform is no third rail*. It is a mainstream, common-sense, pragmatic effort to solve a vexing national problem.

**More Reasons to Pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform This Year**

- The Administration and Congress will grow weary of fighting immigration proxy wars on issue after issue as the year grinds on, as we saw with SCHIP and the economic stimulus debate.
- The upcoming Census will serve as the next issue with which immigration will merge. Passing immigration reform this year will help depoliticize an already highly contentious census and reapportionment process. Additionally, the Census data is the statistic basis for a great deal of the federal funding that goes to state and local governments. *The pressure on Washington from state and local officials – in key battleground states – for comprehensive reform will only continue to mount.*
- Third, as the economy worsens, CIR will remove a trap door under the minimum wage. Fully 5 percent of the American workforce today is undocumented. Bringing them under the protection of American

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law will allow them to be paid minimum wage, prevent exploitation by unscrupulous employers, allow them to unionize will relieve downward pressure on the wages of all Americans.

- Putting the undocumented population on the road to citizenship will undoubtedly increase tax revenue and lift wages for all Americans in a time of economic crisis. Revenue from fees and fines will be generated.
- **The last estimate from the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the expenses for legalization of the millions of undocumented would amount to approximately \$22 billion, while it would generate \$55 billion in revenue**, yielding at least a \$30 billion gain in increased revenues from legalization of the undocumented. This is why so many academics and analysts view immigration reform as part of any economic stimulus plan.
- The current immigration detention system was not designed to handle its current caseload, and has quickly become a legal and moral disgrace.
- Moreover, as the year unfolds, CIR will come to be seen as a vital component of a broader strategy to calm the increasingly dangerous border region.

**Not only is CIR smart policy and the right thing to do, it is also the best course politically. Support of CIR has become a litmus test for Hispanics/Latinos—the fastest growing part of the American electorate. It will be very difficult for either party to succeed in the 21st century without significant Hispanic support.**

**Finally, in this new age of racial reconciliation, passing CIR this year will take the air out of the balloon of some of the most shocking and unacceptable public displays of racism in America today. It is the most pressing moral challenge facing our generation.**

**Our advice to Democrats is: CIR must pass this year because:**

- You promised.
- In recent years, President Obama, Speaker Pelosi and Senate Leader Reid have all repeatedly promised to pass CIR right away, with no delay. Now is the time.
- It will also help lock in the gains made with Hispanic voters in recent elections, and show the electorate that you have what it takes to tackle the tough problems of this new century.

**Our advice to Republicans is:**

- Sue for peace.
- Pass CIR, renounce your recent national commitment to demonizing Hispanics, and give yourself a fighting chance to win these voters at some point in the future.
- Oppose CIR this year, and watch your chance to win national elections again evaporate for a generation or more.

**In Conclusion:**

- It is in the best interest of both political parties, and the nation, to pass CIR this year and begin the process of fixing our terribly broken and increasingly unjust immigration system.
- There is a pragmatic, bi-partisan plan, with broad public support and a deep coalition behind it, ready to go.

- There simply is no compelling political, economic, legislative or moral argument against moving now.

**Mr. President, we are fired up and ready to go. Let's do it. This Year.**