

John McCain on Border Security and Immigration

"As you know, I and many other colleagues twice attempted to pass comprehensive immigration legislation to fix our broken borders; ensure respect for the laws of this country; recognize the important economic contribution of immigrant laborers; apprehend those who came here illegally to commit crimes; and deal practically and humanely with those who came here, as my distant ancestors did, to build a better, safer life for their families, without excusing the fact they came here illegally or granting them privileges before those who have been waiting their turn outside the country. Many Americans did not believe us when we said we would secure our borders, and so we failed in our efforts. I don't want to fail again to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. We must prove we have the resources to secure our borders and use them, while respecting the dignity and rights of citizens and legal residents of the United States. When we have achieved our border security goal, we must enact and implement the other parts of practical, fair and necessary immigration policy. We have economic and humanitarian responsibilities as well, and they require no less dedication from us in meeting them."

- John McCain

John McCain believes America's immigration system is broken. He is committed to a two-step process to reform.

Securing Our Borders First. John McCain's top immigration priority is to finish securing our borders in an expedited manner. Governors of border states will be required to certify that the border is secure. Steps to border security include:

Setting clear guidelines and objectives for securing the border through physical and virtual barriers.

Ensuring that adequate funding is provided for resources on the ground, but also training facilities, support staff and the deployment of technologies.

Dedicating funding to US Attorney's offices in border states.

Implementing sound policies for contracting Department of Homeland Security software and infrastructure.

Deploy Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and other aircraft where needed and appropriate in the border region.

Continue implementation of the US-VISIT comprehensive visitor security program.

Comprehensive Immigration Initiatives for a Secure Nation. Once the borders are secure, John McCain will:

Prosecute "Bad-Actor" Employers. John McCain will implement a secure, accurate, and reliable electronic employment verification system to ensure that individuals are screened for work eligibility in a real-time fashion. John McCain will use this new system in conjunction with other Department of Homeland Security resources to identify and aggressively prosecute employers that continue to hire illegal immigrants. The Electronic Employment Verification System will:

Establish a user-friendly system employing a limited set of secure documents that contain biometric data and are electronically verifiable to check a worker's identity.

Provide responses to employer inquiries in a prompt and timely manner to provide both the employer and employee security in their hiring decisions.

Update and ensure the accuracy of current databases of government agencies that play a role in employment verification.

Protect the identities of each employee being screened and allow both employer and employee adequate time and opportunity to correct possible errors with any information in the system.

Institute targeted auditing by Department of Labor in order to weed out employers abusing the system.

Meet America's Labor Needs. John McCain will implement temporary worker programs that will reflect the labor needs of the United States in both the high-tech and low skilled sectors while protecting the employment opportunities for US workers:

Highly Skilled workers:

Ensure high skilled workers trained and educated in the United States have the opportunity to stay and work in the United States upon graduation.

Reform caps for H-1B visa program to rise and fall in response to market conditions.
Reduce bureaucracy and waiting times for workers to arrive in the United States.

Increase available green card numbers to reflect employer and employee demand.

Extend the ability for H-1B visa holders to renew their H-1B status while waiting for their green card number to become available.

Ensure available and qualified American workers are given adequate and fair opportunities to apply for available positions.

Low-skilled non-agricultural workers:

Implement a usable, market based system for low-skilled workers to enter the United States in an orderly fashion.

Ensure that the cap rises and falls with market demand to meet the changing needs of the economy.

Provide for adequate worker protection to guard against employer abuses of temporary workers.

Protect American workers by designing a program that allows willing and eligible United States workers adequate opportunity to apply for available positions.

Ensure that workers return to their home countries after their temporary period in the United States.

Allow for appropriate visa renewals to assure that both the employer and employee have stability in the workforce.

Offer a limited number of green cards to reflect the small number of workers that may wish to remain in the United States permanently.

Low-skilled agricultural workers:

Reform the H-2A visa program to provide a non-bureaucratic, adaptable, useable program that is reflective of market needs and protects both the immigrant and US workers.

Address the Undocumented. John McCain will address the fact that we have a large number undocumented individuals living in the United States and working in our economy:

All undocumented individuals will be required to enroll in a program to resolve their status.

This program will use background checks to identify criminal aliens for prosecution and deportation.

Assure that the remaining undocumented immigrants learn English, pay back taxes and fines, and pass a citizenship course as part of a path to legal status.

Guarantee that no person here illegally receives a green card before those that have been legally waiting outside the country.

Do a proper accounting of all social security numbers used and attained illegally, rectifying the accounts and alerting those whose identity had been compromised.

The program will also ensure that all undocumented aliens either leave or follow the path to legal residence. America cannot permit a permanent category of individuals that do not have recognized status – a permanent second class.

In addition, the program will provide a system that is fair, humane, realistic, and ensures the rights of the individual and families will be protected.

Ensure that families are reunited.

Address in an expedited manner the status of individuals brought here illegally as minors through no will or intention of their own.

Eliminate the Family Backlog. John McCain will commit to clearing out the backlog of individuals that are waiting legally outside of the country, some for up to 20 years, for their green card number to become available.