



National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

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United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

United States Hispanic Leadership Institute

United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce

U.S.- Mexico Foundation

November 3, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader of the Senate
United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Position on Delay of Administrative Relief

Dear Senator Reid:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 39 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to express our grave disappointment over appeals by Democratic Senate Candidates to President Obama to delay administrative relief for undocumented families and workers until after the midterm election, a call the President subsequently heeded. NHLA urges you to call on the Administration to: (1) immediately suspend the deportation of those eligible for relief under S.744, the 2013 Senate immigration bill; (2) implement administrative relief as soon as possible; and (3) craft administrative relief that is broad and far-reaching. Latino families and communities cannot wait any longer. The time is now.

I. Immediate Suspension of Deportations

NHLA strongly urges you to encourage the President to suspend the deportation of those eligible for Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status under the 2013 Senate immigration bill. Delay of administrative relief is not inconsequential; at least 70,000 individuals will be torn away from their families and communities. It simply makes no sense to deport individuals who stand to benefit from administrative relief in just a few short weeks. Once deported, it would be incredibly difficult for these individuals to successfully apply for and receive relief from outside the country. Furthermore, placing soon-to-be-eligible individuals in detention and removal proceedings makes little fiscal and moral sense. In accordance with its stated immigration enforcement policies, the Administration should cease to detain and cease to commence removal proceedings for individuals who pose no threat to communities and national security and who stand to benefit from administrative relief.

II. Implement Administrative Relief Immediately

NHLA further urges you to press the Administration implement administrative relief immediately. For too long the Latino community has been made to wait by unfulfilled promises and vague assurances of future action by both parties and across the branches of federal government. Until 2012, the Administration claimed it could not suspend the deportation of DREAM-act eligible youth. To date, the Administration has failed to move forward on affirmative relief—more than a year after passage of the Senate bill—while the

Republican-controlled House of Representatives dithered. And most recently, the President pivoted away from his promise to act before the end of this summer.

The President cited the unaccompanied minor “crisis” as part of the rationale behind the delay. However, as the President repeatedly reminded House Republicans, using unaccompanied minors as an excuse not to act “makes no sense,” is “not on the level,” and is “just politics, plain and simple.”

III. Broad Administrative Relief

We ask that you urge the Administration to expand the scope of its forthcoming administrative relief to encompass a greater proportion of the undocumented population. **Administrative relief for three million undocumented immigrants—as reported by the media—is not an acceptable benchmark.** Providing affirmative relief to only three million undocumented individuals would represent a dereliction of the Administration’s promises to heed the needs of the Latino and immigrant communities. To expand the scope of affirmative relief, the Administration should ensure that individuals with long-term residency—regardless of whether they have family ties to citizens, lawful permanent residents, or deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) holders—are eligible for relief. The Administration should require substantially less than ten years of residency in order for individuals to qualify for affirmative relief. A standard that requires a decade of continuous presence is not only unworkable, but incredibly unfair to those who have lived in the country for less than ten years but who still have deep ties to their communities. Furthermore, many qualifying individuals will be unable to obtain the documentary evidence necessary prove a decade of continuous presence, and this burden—combined with financial barriers—will severely reduce the number of individuals able to successfully obtain affirmative relief. The Administration must also use its executive authority—through the exercise of humanitarian parole—to allow recently deported undocumented immigrants to return to the country and to reunite with their families.

Every deportation of a mother or father, son or daughter, neighbor or worker separates families, instills fear in communities, and tears the fabric of our nation. With each passing day, 1,100 immigrants are separated from their families and communities. Nowhere are the effects of deportations felt more acutely than in the Latino community. **In 2013, 96.7 percent, or 356,303, of all deportations were of individuals of Latino descent.** The overrepresentation of Latinos in deportations is not simply a byproduct of the large undocumented Latino population, but also a result of discriminatory practices and policies at the federal, state, and local level. Any delay in the announcement of administrative relief has significant consequences on Latino children, their families, and entire communities, increasing insecurity, instability and devastation. NHLA asks that you demand the President to enact affirmative relief immediately, that it reach as many immigrants as contemplated by the Senate in 2013, and not be unduly onerous in the burden placed on applicants for affirmative relief.

Please contact NHLA through Jose Magana-Salgado, of MALDEF, at jmagana-salgado@maldef.org or 202-572-0558, or Bertha Guerrero, of the Hispanic Federation, at bguerrero@hispanicfederation.org or 202-641-7186, should you have any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderón
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair