

## Why Immigration Reform Should Work to Keep Families Together

### **Family Immigration is a Cornerstone of the American Immigration System.**

For more than a hundred years, immigrants have been able to bring their close family members to join them in this country. Even in rough economic times, our government recognized family reunification as a core national interest. Our current immigration system allows U.S. citizens and green card holders to bring their closest family members, including spouses, minor children, and parents, from other countries to live permanently in America through family-sponsored immigration. To apply for a family based visa, immigrants must have a sponsor in the United States who will sign a contract promising to support them financially.

### **The Family Is the Bedrock of American Society.**

Our immigration system must keep families together. Families sometimes wait 10, 15 or even 20 years to be reunited. Our faiths teach us that families are sacred and serve as the bedrock of our communities. Separating husbands from wives, sisters from brothers, and children from parents for years creates unnecessary suffering and has a harmful effect on the wellbeing of our communities. People waiting for approval are not allowed to visit the United States, meaning they are not allowed to see their family members for the years they are waiting. A system that keeps family members separate hurts everyone, because the family is the basic unit of our society, and everything falls apart without it. Our laws should reflect our values. We should do everything we can to keep families together, not force them to remain separate.

### **Family Immigration Reform is an American Solution.**

Any policy that would keep family members apart for decades at a time, husband from wife, and mother from child can't be an American solution. A real American solution would reward immigrants for following the law, not punish them. Legislation such as the Reuniting Families Act does that by making sure that everyone who applies the right way will get to be with their loved ones in a reasonable amount of time.

### **The Current Immigration System is Broken, Outdated, and Must be Fixed.**

The current immigration system has not been updated in 20 years, and the massive backlog in visa applications is one of many clear signs that the system is not working. Our rules were designed to ensure a steady, manageable flow of legal immigration and unite families. Yet we now have an out-of-control flow of illegal immigration, while legal immigrants, who have done everything by the book, are forced to spend years or decades separated from their families. Every year, thousands of visas also go unused because of bureaucratic red tape, meaning that an average of 20,000 immigrants who should legally receive a visa don't get one. The system is broken, and we need to fix it now.

### **Families Make America Stronger.**

Immigrants who have the support of family members are better able to quickly integrate into the mainstream of American society and become productive taxpayers. Now more than ever, with the economy like it is today, we need more people who can be committed to their new country, work hard, play by the rules, start businesses and pay taxes. These families will expand our tax base, broaden tax revenues, and strengthen our economy. That's exactly what we get when immigrant families come together and support each other.

### **Family Immigration Supports Hardworking Legal Immigrants Who Contribute to America.**

This reform is about helping legal immigrants unite with their families. Legal immigrants who have the support of strong families are better able to work hard, pay taxes, buy homes and start businesses that create jobs. Immigrants who have played by the rules and are able to bring their families here are committed to becoming Americans and giving back to this country.

### **Our Immigration System Shouldn't Punish Legal Immigrants Who Have Played by Our Rules.**

For some immigrants, a family member abroad is the only family they have. It's just wrong to create laws that punish immigrants who have done everything right and come to our country legally by telling them they can never be reunited with their closest family members. The average immigrant sponsors fewer than two dependents in a lifetime, and any sponsor is required by law to be able to support family members they bring over. We ought to be encouraging family members to be together, becoming productive taxpayers and supporting each other so we don't have to.