

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

The President's Weekly Address

November 22, 2014

Hi, everybody. Today, I'm at Del Sol High School in Las Vegas to talk with students and families about immigration.

We're a nation of immigrants. It has always given America a big advantage over other nations. It keeps our country young, dynamic, and entrepreneurial. But today, our immigration system is broken, and everybody knows it.

That's why, nearly 2 years ago, I came to this school and laid out principles for immigration reform. And 5 months later, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents in the Senate came together to pass a commonsense compromise bill. That bill would have secured our border, while giving undocumented immigrants who already live here a pathway to citizenship if they paid a fine, started paying their taxes, and went to the back of the line. Independent experts said it would grow our economy and shrink our deficits.

Now, had the House of Representatives allowed a yes-or-no vote on that kind of bill, it would have passed with support from both parties. Today it would be the law, but for a year and a half Republican leaders in the House have refused to allow that simple vote. Now, I still believe that the best way to solve this problem is by working together—both parties—to pass that kind of bipartisan law. But until that happens, there are actions I have a legal authority to take as President, the same kinds of actions taken by Democratic and Republican Presidents before me, that will help make our immigration system more fair and more just.

I took those actions this week. We're providing more resources at the border to help law enforcement personnel stop illegal crossings and send home those who do cross over. We'll focus enforcement resources on people who are threats to our security: felons—not families, criminals—not children. And we'll bring more undocumented immigrants out of the shadows so they can play by the rules, pay their fair share of taxes, pass a criminal background check, and get right with the law.

Nothing about this action will benefit anyone who has come to this country recently or who might try and come to America illegally in the future. It does not grant citizenship or the right to stay here permanently, or offer the same benefits that citizens receive. And it's certainly not amnesty, no matter how often the critics say it. Amnesty is the immigration system we have today, millions of people living here without paying their taxes or playing by the rules. And the actions I took this week will finally start fixing that.

As you might have heard, there are Members of Congress who question my authority to make our immigration system work better. Well, I have one answer for that: Pass a bill. The day I sign it into law, the actions I've taken to help solve this problem will no longer be necessary.

In the meantime, we can't allow a disagreement over a single issue to be a deal breaker on every issue. That's not how our democracy works. This debate deserves more than politics as usual. It's important for our future. It's about who we are and the future we want to build.

We are only here because this country welcomed our forebears and taught them that being American is about more than what we look like or where we come from. What makes us

Americans is our shared commitment to an ideal that all of us are created equal and all of us have the chance to make of our lives what we will. That's the country we inherited, and it's the one we have to leave for future generations.

Thank you. God bless you, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:30 p.m. on November 21 in the auxiliary gymnasium at Del Sol High School in Las Vegas, NV, for broadcast on November 22. In the address, the President referred to S. 744. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 21, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 22.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Las Vegas, NV.

Subjects: Congress : Bipartisanship; Defense and national security : Border security; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Immigration and naturalization : American "melting pot"; Immigration and naturalization : Citizenship; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Legislation, proposed : "Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act"; Nevada : Del Sol High School in Las Vegas; Nevada : President's visit.

DCPD Number: DCPD201400883.