



# Justice & Commonsense: Immigration Reform for New York



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Americans across the political spectrum agree that our nation's immigration system is broken.

Up to one million undocumented immigrants in New York State are trapped in a system that makes it almost impossible to obtain lawful status, even if they have lived here since they were children, have paid their taxes, or have children who are American citizens.

There is a human rights crisis in New York and across the United States—immigrant homes are raided; hundreds of thousands of people are detained, some indefinitely, in inhumane conditions and without medical care; and unscrupulous employers prey on the undocumented. Our immigration system is so flawed that even documented immigrants regularly suffer from many of these problems.

The situation is too dire to continue to ignore. Congress must adopt practical solutions to fix our immigration system and uphold our nation's values. All Americans' rights and liberties are at stake.





## A sensible, fair immigration policy would:

### Provide a realistic path to citizenship:

- Immigrants want to come to America legally, but our broken immigration system makes that nearly impossible.
- The status quo has created a permanent underclass. Millions of people are regularly exploited by unscrupulous employers and are afraid to report crimes, seek medical care, or serve as witnesses in legal proceedings because they or their loved ones may be thrown in a detention center or deported.
- Keeping millions of people in the shadows is not in the moral, economic, or security interests of New York or our nation. It's impractical and inhumane to rip families apart and round up and deport millions of people.



**Raiding people's homes and workplaces will not fix the problem. We need a realistic pathway to citizenship so people can fully participate in the American economy and society.**

### Restore due process, judicial review and basic fairness to the immigration system:

- Family values are a cornerstone of our society. Yet our immigration system regularly tears families apart. When immigrants are detained, they are often held hundreds of miles away from their spouses, children or parents.
- The U.S. Constitution guarantees every person due process under the law—regardless of immigration status. Yet in many cases, our immigration laws prevent judges from considering the facts of a case before imprisoning people, sometimes for years, without hearings or access to lawyers or their families.

**When we deprive one vulnerable group of due process and equal protection, we erode the constitutional protections all Americans value.**

### Respect Americans' privacy and reject backdoor attempts to establish a national ID card:

- New York Sen. Charles Schumer, chairman of the immigration subcommittee, has proposed creating a "forgery proof" worker ID card containing biometric data, such as fingerprints or iris scans, to verify workers' legal status. Every person wishing to work in the U.S.—American citizens and immigrants alike—would need to carry the card.

■ Such a card would lead to a national ID system—a concept Americans have opposed throughout our history. National ID systems threaten New Yorkers’ privacy by forming the backbone of an electronic system to track Americans’ daily activities.

■ Other leading proposals call for the expansion of a flawed national database system that will require all Americans to receive government approval to work. Inevitable data errors and technical glitches will lead to lost job opportunities and significant delays in finding work.

**The government should not hinder people’s ability to work, especially in the current economy. And workers shouldn’t need the government’s permission to take a job. We cannot sacrifice traditional American values prizing labor and privacy for bad ideas; we need real solutions.**

## Treat immigrants in detention centers humanely:

■ Our country detains nearly 300,000 immigrants annually, including children. Many are kept in appalling conditions without access to basic medical care and too many have died in custody as a result.

■ There are no legal and binding rules to ensure that immigrants in detention centers receive humane treatment.

■ Many of the immigrants crowding our jails are community and family members who pose no threat or flight risk. We spend nearly \$2 billion each year keeping hundreds of thousands of non-violent people in detention, away from their spouses, children and parents. Safe and effective alternatives are much cheaper.



**Nobody should be treated inhumanely or denied basic medical care while in U.S. custody. This is not what America is about.**

## End local enforcement of immigration laws:

■ Under presidents Bush and Obama, the Department of Homeland Security has increasingly delegated immigration enforcement to local police departments.

■ When local police act as immigration agents, it jeopardizes everyone’s safety. Immigrants, fearful that they might be deported, don’t report information about crime, weakening public safety. Both the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Major Cities Chiefs Association oppose laws that create a division between police and immigrant groups.

■ The record shows that local enforcement of immigration law invites rampant racial profiling. Innocent people who look or sound “foreign”—including U.S. citizens—are stopped or asked for proof of legal status.

**Local immigration enforcement wastes scarce resources and hinders law enforcement’s ability to investigate real crimes and respond to emergencies. We need meaningful immigration reform that makes us all safer, not ineffective, stop-gap measures.**



## Get Involved:

New Yorkers from across the state and the political spectrum are uniting in support of comprehensive immigration reform. The **New York Civil Liberties Union** is supporting this effort by creating volunteer Activist Task Forces across New York. Join us as we push our representatives in Congress to reform our immigration system so that it finally respects the fundamental civil rights and liberties that make our country strong and safe. Get involved today.

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