



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE UNITED STATES

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July 18, 2013

TO: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
FROM: Elisabeth MacNamara, President
RE: Pass Immigration Reform

Now that the Senate has passed Immigration Reform legislation, the League of Women Voters believes that it is time for the House of Representatives to act to ensure that a path to citizenship is available to all who remain legally in the United States. Immigrants have helped weave the fabric and identity of our nation. We believe that comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship will strengthen our nation and society.

The League of Women Voters was founded in 1920 after the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote. One of our fundamental goals is to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We believe it is essential that all in the U.S. have a clear path to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in order to strengthen our nation and society. A dangerous precedent would be created if Congress were to create a large new subclass of people in the U.S. -- those who live here permanently but who are not required to carry the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship.

Citizenship is the fundamental sign of allegiance to the U.S., our Constitution, and our way of life. In order to become citizens, immigrants must learn about our system of government, understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and swear allegiance to the United States of America. These are fundamental steps to integration in American society, and it is in the interests of current citizens, immigrants and future generations that we build one nation. Allowing or even requiring currently undocumented persons to gain permanent residency without becoming citizens will create a large group within the U.S. who stand apart and are neither allowed nor required to fully commit or contribute to our society.

The League of Women Voters believes that comprehensive immigration reform must include an efficient, expeditious system for legal entry into the United States, improved safeguards against illegal immigration, and reforms that meet the economic, business and employment needs of the U.S. As part of immigration reform legislation, we also support programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the United States to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs. If employers hire unauthorized workers, they should be subject to significant fines and penalties; verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers are also needed.

We urge you to support more effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States and increased personnel at borders to prevent unauthorized immigration. But the League does not believe that a path to citizenship for current unauthorized immigrants should be contingent on border security measures; rather both should be required in their own right.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that all in the U.S. have a clear path to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in order to strengthen our nation and society.