

A Nation *of* Immigrants:

REALIZING A
COMPREHENSIVE
IMMIGRATION
REFORM

COMMUNITY
ACTION KIT



ENGAGE.
EMPOWER.
ENLIGHTEN.



FOUNDED IN 1988, MPAC IS AN AMERICAN INSTITUTION WHICH INFORMS AND SHAPES PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY BY SERVING AS A TRUSTED RESOURCE TO DECISION MAKERS IN GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND POLICY INSTITUTIONS. MPAC IS ALSO COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING LEADERS WITH THE PURPOSE OF ENHANCING THE POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF AMERICAN MUSLIMS.

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INTRODUCTION

Concerned for the security and integrity of our country, the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) offers this toolkit as a faith-based policy contribution to the ongoing national debate on immigration reform. Rooted in the shared American and Islamic values of freedom, equality, justice and human dignity, we argue that comprehensive immigration reform is both urgent and necessary.

With 11 million undocumented people residing in the United States, a rapidly shifting demographic, and an ever-changing economic landscape, immigration reform is needed to address current realities. With an aging population, we need to have a plentiful supply of skill of labor to support such a growing group. Corporations are demanding high-skilled labor, and are unable to satisfy their demand from within the United States alone. These factors, along with addressing the millions residing in the country illegally, make immigration reform a priority issue.

WHY SHOULD AMERICAN MUSLIMS CARE?

Immigration reform is an issue not limited to one particular ethnicity or socio-political-economic class of people. Two-thirds of the estimated 2.5-4 million American Muslims are either immigrants themselves or the descendants of immigrants to our country. Like many other communities, the American Muslim community has a vital stake in the current debate about comprehensive immigration reform. At the core of the Islamic faith, is the story of the Prophet Muhammad and the early group of persecuted Muslims fleeing from Mecca to a town called Yathrib that welcomed these immigrants. American Muslims are directly affected by the outcome of the debate, both economically and morally. What lawmakers do with immigration will have an impact on the labor market, the national debt, and immigrant visas. In addition, the decisions have a moral impact on American Muslims, since Quranic and Prophetic teachings call on us to treat our fellow human beings with respect, and establish justice on the earth.

In a broader context, as citizens of the United States, American Muslims should have a voice in issues that affect the public interest of the nation they reside in and call home.



OUR VALUES

In order to best serve the public interest, referred to as *maslaha* in Islamic thought, we believe four core values should guide our comprehensive immigration reform strategy. They are:

1. HUMAN DIGNITY

Every person deserves to be treated humanely and justly and not exploited – regardless of their nationality or legal status.

2. THE RULE OF LAW

Breaking the law – through illegal entry or overstay – is wrong and has negative consequences. Law enforcement should also give first priority to maintaining public safety, such as focusing on violent offenders and those engaging in trafficking of narcotics and human beings.

3. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

All government programs should be as effective and fiscally efficient as possible so as to not waste taxpayers' funds.

4. ECONOMIC GROWTH

Reform – particularly the path to legalization component – must not harm the job prospects of legal immigrants and U.S. citizens. Those new to this country and using its services should also be expected to contribute through education and/or finding employment.

With these values in mind, MPAC favors a comprehensive set of solutions addressing the root causes of our broken immigration system. Currently, the Senate's Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill is stalled in the House of Representatives.

Now is the time to engage your members of Congress and community members to urge them to push for passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

SUMMARY OF THE SENATE'S COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM BILL (S.744)

Introduced by a bipartisan “Gang of Eight” this spring, this bill is the most comprehensive proposal to address immigration to date. It addresses who is in the nation currently, and who to let in in the future. To address both, the bill lays out proposals for border security and the granting of visas:

BORDER SECURITY

S.744 reforms border security in many ways, and if passed, it would:

1. Increase the number of U.S. Border Patrol agents to 38,405 by 2021 and increase U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers by 3,500 by 2017. The officers will be recruited from the Armed Forces reserves.
2. Allow states on the southern border to call on the National Guard for extra border security.
3. Allow for the potential establishment of a Southern Border Security Commission, a group of appointees that will make policy recommendations.
4. Increase the number of federally appointed judges in the southwest border region to deal with immigration cases.
5. Create additional surveillance systems, horse patrols and unmanned aerial and water vehicles to monitor the border region.
6. Create an interagency collaboration task force to enhance border security by initiating interagency communication and sharing of equipment and technology.
7. Train border security forces to appropriately deal with immigrants and respect their values.

ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

Factoring the cost of implementation, the Senate immigration reform bill would yield approximately \$175 billion in savings by 2023, as well as an additional \$700 billion in the subsequent decade. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the bill would increase the real gross domestic product (GDP) by 3.3% in 2023 and 5.4% in 2033. The bill would also reduce the federal budget deficit by \$850 billion during the next 20 years.

Regarding employment of immigrants, the Senate bill would:

1. Expand the E-Verify system, which is currently only used for federal employment, to state and local level:
 - Give small businesses four years to implement E-Verify
 - Give companies with 500 employees three years
 - Give companies with 5,000 employees two years
2. Raise the cap on H-1B visas (visas for high-skilled laborers) to 110,000 workers per year
3. Reserve an additional 25,000 visas for immigrants with high degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)
4. Cap visas for entrepreneurs at 10,000 a year

With the increase in employment, the Social Security Administration estimates an additional \$300 billion in net revenue over the next decade.

GRAHAM AMENDMENT

One provision in the bill, known as the Graham Amendment, allows additional screening for immigrants from a “country known to pose a threat, or that contains groups or organizations that pose a threat, to the national security of the United States.”

The Graham Amendment will have a discriminatory and disproportionate effect on immigrants from Muslim-majority countries. Because the bill has no list of countries or criteria on what determines a country that poses a national security threat, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security will be given broad discretion in determining which countries’ residents will require additional screening.

Not only does the amendment condone racial profiling, it will have a chilling effect on our economy. With American companies demanding workers with technical backgrounds, high-skilled workers from Muslim-majority countries will be less likely to apply because of this arbitrary additional screening.



HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Diverse communities all around the country have taken a public stand by hosting events, sharing their stories as DREAMers, and educating the American public at large about the massive impact of immigration and immigration reform.

2 ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE NOW

1. SHARE YOUR STORY

Do this publicly on media and/or social media as an immigrant or as someone who values immigration as a core American value that strengthens our national fabric.

2. CALL YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Stand with America's immigrant population to advocate for a bill that ensures life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all people.

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

1. IMMIGRATION REFORM MUST BE ADDRESSED QUICKLY AND THOROUGHLY.

Though this bill is far from perfect, it is a good step to reforming our immigration system. Over 11 million residents of our country deserve a chance to become Americans, and we should keep our borders open to future immigration.

2. IMMIGRATION REFORM IS GOOD FOR OUR ECONOMY.

The Congressional Budget Office has shown that the bill would increase GDP by 3.3 and decrease the deficit by over \$700 billion. In addition, the labor market would receive much-needed high-skill workers.

3. THE GRAHAM AMENDMENT IS INEFFECTIVE IN KEEPING OUR NATION SAFE AND BLATANT RACIAL PROFILING.

Safety cannot be ensured by profiling based on the arbitrary criterion of the country of origin of immigrants. Such a provision does not make our country safer and goes against the values of equality and justice we hold as a nation.



CONTACT YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Contact your U.S. Representative to engage him or her on the critical issue of immigration reform. To find out who your representative is, visit house.gov/representatives/find.

WRITING A LETTER TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

Most offices of elected officials prefer email communication from constituents. As a general rule, Members of Congress are far more likely to heed your message if you are one of their constituents.

ADDRESSING YOUR REPRESENTATIVE:

The Honorable (full name) _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. (Last Name)

STATE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR LETTER

- State your purpose for writing in the first sentence of the letter.
- Be courteous.
- If appropriate, include personal information about how and why immigration reform matters and relates to you.
- Address only one issue in each letter or email.

CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

- Telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member. Ask to speak with the aide who handles immigration reform.
- After identifying yourself as a constituent, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as “Please tell Representative (Name) that I support comprehensive immigration reform and that I think he/she should too when it comes up for a vote.”
- State your reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your representative’s position on the Senate bill (S.744) and immigration reform. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

ENGAGE THE MEDIA

Sharing your story is a critical way you can help others understand what's on the line for not only the 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. but for all Americans who cherish our tradition of being a country of immigrants. Consider writing an op-ed, posting a message on your social media accounts, and offering to speak to media professionals in order to show media consumers that American Muslims are invested in immigration reform alongside people of all other walks of life.

CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS

Media professionals in local markets always seek out local residents who are impacted by national and international issues so they can personalize big issues and big stories. You have the opportunity to serve as a source for media professionals who are interested in broadening their coverage of the immigration debate.

- To find out who is covering immigration in your local media outlets, visit their websites and search "immigration" to see what reporters come up.
- You should be able to find their direct email address at the top or bottom of the article. Email them directly appreciating their coverage of the issue and offering to serve as a source who has had personal experience navigating the system.
- If you cannot find the reporter's email address, visit the newspapers "tips" or "assignment desk" to share your idea and your contact information with the editors.

WRITE AN OP-ED

Op-eds are longer than letters to the editor, and there is more competition for space. You should check the website of the newspaper's opinion section for specific length requirements (usually 600-800 words).

- Try to write on a specific angle related to immigration and/or its reform. Sharing your story or the story of someone you know who has struggled with the immigration system would make for a possible introduction to your op-ed that catches editors' and readers' attention.
- If you can, use a professional and catchy title that suggests authority and expertise, do so.
- If you work for an organization, get permission to sign the op-ed as a representative of that organization.
- Send it to the newspapers where you live first, and avoid sending it to two newspapers in the same "market." Also send it to MPAC's Communications Coordinator Marium Mohiuddin for followup (mariam@mpac.org).
- Assure the op-ed editor in your cover letter that the piece has not been submitted to any other papers in their market.
- When writing your op-ed, be sure to keep in mind the audience who will be reading the article – the readership of the publication.

ENGAGE LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Research groups in your area that are advocating for immigration reform, and reach out to them to look into volunteering or collaborating with them.
- If you are part of an organization, partner up with other organizations by either co-sponsoring their events or asking them to co-sponsor yours.
- Invite local groups to talk at your community center, home, or place of worship.
- Set up an event (townhall forum, poetry event, movie night, etc.) in collaboration with other groups in your area to educate and galvanize the community on the importance of immigration reform.
- Plan a “Meet-Your-State-Legislator” Day with other groups, and visit your state legislator (or invite him/her to your community center) to show that immigration reform has broad support.

ENGAGE YOUR SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Post statuses and tweets that encourage your friends and family to contact their elected officials regarding immigration reform.
- Record a 30-60 second video and post it online explaining why and how immigration reform is important to you.
- Support immigration reform events in your local community. If you are having an event, do not forget to put it on your city’s community calendar and share it on your social media accounts.
- Find out what local interfaith events are taking place in your community and encourage family and friends to attend.

“IT IS NOT THE CRITIC WHO COUNTS; NOT THE MAN WHO POINTS OUT HOW THE STRONG MAN STUMBLES, OR WHERE THE DOER OF DEEDS COULD HAVE DONE THEM BETTER. THE CREDIT BELONGS TO THE MAN WHO IS ACTUALLY IN THE ARENA, WHOSE FACE IS MARRED BY DUST AND SWEAT AND BLOOD; WHO STRIVES VALIANTLY; WHO ERRS, WHO COMES SHORT AGAIN AND AGAIN, BECAUSE THERE IS NO EFFORT WITHOUT ERROR AND SHORTCOMING; BUT WHO DOES ACTUALLY STRIVE TO DO THE DEEDS; WHO KNOWS GREAT ENTHUSIASMS, THE GREAT DEVOTIONS; WHO SPENDS HIMSELF IN A WORTHY CAUSE; WHO AT THE BEST KNOWS IN THE END THE TRIUMPH OF HIGH ACHIEVEMENT, AND WHO AT THE WORST, IF HE FAILS, AT LEAST FAILS WHILE DARING GREATLY, SO THAT HIS PLACE SHALL NEVER BE WITH THOSE COLD AND TIMID SOULS WHO NEITHER KNOW VICTORY NOR DEFEAT.”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



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Founded in 1988, MPAC is an American institution which informs and shapes public opinion and policy by serving as a trusted resource to decision makers in government, media and policy institutions. MPAC is also committed to developing leaders with the purpose of enhancing the political and civic participation of Muslim Americans.

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