



# Immigration Reform Policy Priorities

## **The System Is Broken**

The problems with our broken immigration system have grown over the past 30+ years to the point that we now have millions of immigrants present unlawfully, most of whom have been here more than a decade and who are contributing to our local communities, economies and churches. Past attempts to legislatively solve this growing national dilemma have failed, only causing more division and suspicion in our country. It does not have to be this way. World Relief supports solutions that honor the rule of law while addressing the economic, moral, humanitarian and security issues in a fair way.

## **The Bible Comes First**

As evangelical Christians, our approach to immigration policy is driven by biblical principles. We believe that each person is made in God's image and should be treated humanely; that God has ordained the role of civil government, including the responsibility to protect the safety of citizens, maintain order and respect the rule of law, which is diminished when laws are violated without consequence; that because God created the family unit, governments should not violate the unity of the family except in the rarest of circumstances; that God is concerned with the wellbeing of those who are vulnerable, including the orphan, the widow and the foreigner, and it is appropriate for citizens to encourage our government to treat these vulnerable groups with fairness and compassion; and that God delights in redemption, when those who have violated the law are able to be restored.

## **The Time Is Now For Reform**

A solution to our nation's immigration problems is long overdue. Deporting all immigrants in the country unlawfully is neither economically feasible nor morally just. Immigrant families are integral parts of our communities, and children have been born and raised here who are US citizens. Many immigrant families have been here for decades, and many are members of local churches. We must develop solutions that both honor the law and are compassionate.



# Broad Immigration Reforms

## Background

The reality is that our entire immigration system is in need of reforms to better serve the interests not only of immigrants but also of our national economy and society. Of the many reforms needed, there are three categories of particularly vulnerable immigrants who we believe viable policy solutions exist in the short-term: dreamers, TPS recipients, and agricultural workers.

## Policy Solutions

Like other evangelical Christians, World Relief has long advocated for reforms that would essentially make three significant changes:

- Make it harder to immigrate illegally, by investing in reasonable border security strategies, while still respecting the right of those fleeing a credible fear of persecution to seek asylum
- Make it easier to immigrate legally, by adjusting our visa systems to match the needs of the U.S. labor market, to ensure that families can be reunified more quickly and to offer refuge to some of the most vulnerable individuals who have been forced to flee persecution abroad
- Allow immigrants in the country unlawfully who meet certain qualifications to admit their violation of law, pay a fine as a form of restitution for their violation of law and then earn permanent legal status over time, which would then allow them to pursue naturalization through our existing legal processes.
- Addressing the root causes of violence, poverty and persecution that lead so many people to leave their homes and countries in the first place, such that fewer people would feel they have no choice but to emigrate in search of safety and opportunity.

Notably, we have never advocated an amnesty, which would mean to simply ignore and forgive the violation of an immigration law without consequence, but rather have joined a broad range of other evangelical leaders in calling for a [Restitution-Based Immigration](#)



[Reform](#), which we believe would both be compassionate and keep families together but also respect and actually restore the rule of law.

## Talking Points

- A post-election poll of North Carolina evangelical voters found that most oppose amnesty for immigrants in the country unlawfully — but the same poll found that most North Carolina evangelicals support a proposal that would require immigrants in the country unlawfully to pay a significant fine and then earn permanent legal status, which they clearly do not view as “amnesty” since it requires an element of restitution.
- Similarly, a national poll from [LifeWay Research](#) found that 68% of evangelical Christians supported legislative proposals that would pair improvements to border security with an earned legalization process for immigrants in the country unlawfully who pay a fine as restitution for their offense.
- Most undocumented immigrants — including the many who are Christians themselves — are desperate to get right with the law; many are very upset by their “illegal” status and would do almost anything to make things right while still being able to stay with their families, but current law presents no option for them to do so. Most would be eager to pay a fine if it meant the chance to earn permanent legal status.
- We believe this approach both honors the biblical principles of respecting governing authorities and the rule of law (Romans 13) and is compassionate and would keep families together.
- It’s also probably the only proposal that can earn the bipartisan support necessary to pass: in fact, not only might it pass the U.S. Senate, it already has: in both 2006 (with the support of President Bush, and the affirmative vote of then-U.S. Senator Joe Biden) and in 2013 (with the support of President Obama and Vice-President Biden), the U.S. Senate has passed bipartisan bills by significant margins that paired significant investments in border security, reforms to the U.S. visa system and an earned legalization process with an eventual path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who paid a fine as restitution for their violation of an immigration laws. Those Senate-passed bills stalled in the Republican-controlled House of

Representatives, where neither bill was called to a vote — but if they could pass the U.S. Senate today, they would be much more likely to actually make it into law.

- As Christian leaders, we're not in the business of supporting Republicans or Democrats, but we do call both Republicans and Democrats to pursue public policies that are guided by biblical principles. These reforms are long overdue, and we pray that our elected officials will put aside partisan differences to make them happen this year.
- More targeted reforms such as a solution for Dreamers, for long-term recipients of Temporary Protected Status and improvements to the process for immigrant farm workers would all be good first steps to demonstrate that bipartisan cooperation is still possible — but we ultimately still need broader, more comprehensive reforms.