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The President's Weekly Address
July 13, 2013

Hi, everybody. Two weeks ago, a large bipartisan majority of Senators voted to pass commonsense, comprehensive immigration reform, taking an important step towards fixing a broken immigration system once and for all.

Now, this bill was a compromise, and neither side got everything they wanted. But it was largely consistent with the key principles of commonsense reform that most of us in both parties have repeatedly laid out. If passed, the Senate's plan would build on the historic gains we've made in border security over the past 4 years with the most aggressive border security plan in our history. It would offer a pathway to earned citizenship for the 11 million people who are in this country illegally, a pathway that includes paying penalties, learning English, and going to the end of the line behind everyone trying to come here legally. And it would modernize our legal immigration system to make it more consistent with our values.

The Senate's plan would also provide a big boost to our recovery. And on Wednesday, we released a report detailing exactly how big a boost that would be. The report is based on the findings of independent, nonpartisan economists and experts who concluded that, if the Senate's plan becomes law, our economy will be 5 percent larger in two decades compared to the status quo. That's $1.4 trillion added to our economy just by fixing our immigration system.

Here in America, we've always been a nation of immigrants. That's what's kept our workforce dynamic, our businesses on the cutting edge, and our economy the strongest in the world. But under the current system, too many smart, hard-working immigrants are prevented from contributing to that success.

Immigration reform would make it easier for highly skilled immigrants and those who study at our colleges and universities to start businesses and create jobs right here in America. Foreign companies would be more likely to invest here. The demand for goods and services would go up, creating more jobs for American workers. Every worker and business would be required to pay their fair share in taxes, reducing our deficit by nearly $850 billion over the next two decades. And since a large portion of those taxes go towards retirement programs that millions of Americans depend on, Social Security would actually get stronger over the long term, adding 2 years to the life of the program's trust fund.

That's what immigration reform would mean for our economy, but only if we act. If we don't do anything to fix our broken system, our workforce will continue to shrink as baby boomers retire. We won't benefit from highly skilled immigrants starting businesses and creating jobs here. American workers will have to make due with lower wages and fewer protections. And without more immigrants and businesses paying their fair share in taxes, our deficit will be higher, and programs like Social Security will be under more strain.

And we've been debating this issue for more than a decade, ever since President Bush first proposed the broad outlines of immigration reform, and I think he gave a very good speech this past week expressing his hope that a bipartisan, comprehensive bill can become law.

If Democrats and Republicans, including President Bush and I, can agree on something, that's a pretty good place to start. Now the House needs to act so I can sign commonsense immigration reform into law. And if you agree, tell your Representatives that now is the time.

Call or e-mail or post on their Facebook walls and ask them to get this done. Because together, we can grow our economy and keep America strong for years to come.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on July 12 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on July 13. In the address, the President referred to former President George W. Bush. He also referred to S. 744. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 13.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

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