

# The Modern Immigration Debate

## Directions:

You have been tasked with writing a well researched 5 paragraph essay that proposes an immigration policy in the United States. Read the introduction below and begin your research.

Legislators and policy makers in the United States face a difficult task in dealing with immigration reform. Millions of families, both those foreign born and those born in the United States, are impacted by this reform. Your task is to help them in their task.

Below is a list of various immigration topics and solutions proposed by diverse groups and organizations in the United States. Each has a short summary, but these summaries barely scratch the surface of the topic. You are to research and analyze each topic and develop your own opinion about comprehensive immigration reform. You will then write a short essay outlining your proposed solution. Paragraph 1 should contain a clear thesis. Paragraphs 2 and 3 should summarize what is included in your proposal and why. Paragraph 4 should outline the impact of your reform on Immigration in the United States. Your final paragraph will be your summation and conclusion.

Most of the topics listed are parts of total reform; you may include a combination of several elements in your final proposal. Things to consider include: What does it mean to become a citizen? To what extent do immigrant populations with their varying cultures and values, affect the political health of the United States? What are the dangers of illegal immigration? Does the United States have a responsibility to the children of immigrants brought to the United States illegally?

What does it mean to become a citizen? To what extent are there responsibilities or commitments that go along with citizenship?

## Fully Open Borders

If the United States were to opt for Open Borders, it would remove all restrictions on immigration to the United States. Anyone who wished to come to the country and establish residency, could legally do so.

## Retaining the Status Quo

Retaining the status quo would mean keeping the current laws on immigration in place. Taking this position, one would assume that the immigration system now in place is working well and does not need any improvements.

## Increased Border Security

This phrase is stated often in political debates, but it could mean many things. Improving the fence along the border, increasing the number of border patrol agents, increasing the number of patrols occurring along the border, and various other changes would fall into this category. The goal would be to limit the number of people attempting to illegally cross the border and maintaining better surveillance on those who arrive at border crossing points.

## Increasing Guest Worker Permit Visas

Guest worker permit visas allow immigrants the opportunity to come to the United States legally for a given period of time to work or go to school. Expanding or reforming this program could allow more immigrants eager to work to come to the United States. Solutions include expanding the use of green cards, the red card guest worker permit program, expanding of H1a agricultural visas, expanding h1b visas, and more.

## Amnesty

Granting amnesty would allow for those who have come to the country illegally to become legal citizens of the United States, gaining all the privileges and taking on all the responsibilities of citizenship.

## DREAM Act

Standing for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors, this legislative proposal would grant conditional residency to persons who entered the United States before the age of 16 and lived here for at least 5 years. Then, upon reaching certain objectives, they would be granted permanent residency. Although the DREAM Act was not passed by Congress, in June of 2012, Barak Obama announced that his administration would not deport illegal immigrants who would qualify under the DREAM act were it passed.

## End Birthright Citizenship

Birthright citizenship was established in Article 1 of the 14th amendment to the United States Constitution. Ratified in 1868, this clause is interpreted to mean any person born on United States soil, is a citizen of the United States. Many

believe this has caused people to come here illegally for the sole purpose of having children in order to make them citizens.

## Easing the Pathway to Citizenship

The pathway to citizenship refers to the opportunities available to immigrants to becoming fully citizens of the United States. Easing the regulations surrounding this process would allow more immigrants to become full citizens.

## Increased Deportation of Illegal Immigrants

Deportation is the forced return of immigrants back to their country of origin. This is usually targeted toward those who have come to the country illegally or performed illegal acts while under United States jurisdiction.

## Increased Punishment for Businesses Employing Illegal Immigrants

Increasing the punishment for businesses employing illegal immigrants would give an incentive for companies to increase their diligence when hiring immigrants to ensure they are in the country legally. Proponents of this policy believe it could help curb illegal immigration.

## State Based Solutions

Each state has a different experience when it comes to immigration. States in the southwest of the country face a very different reality than those in the rest of the country. Allowing states to make their own laws on immigration could lead to more innovation as these “laboratories of

democracy” test different solutions. Recent acts like Arizona State Bill 1070 are an example of this solution.

## Your Own Solution

The few solutions stated here barely scratch the surface of the numerous proposals that are

currently being debated concerning immigration. But who is to say these are the only possible solutions? Given what you’ve learned about immigration, develop your own creative proposals for reforming immigration in the United States.

## Extension idea

Conduct research to find trustworthy evidence on one or more of the following topics:

- Contributions by noteworthy immigrants in our past
- Estimates of the overall economic impact of illegal immigrants
- Estimates of overall economic impact of legal immigrants
- What social programs are available for legal immigrants and how much do they cost?
- Percent of prison population comprised of illegal immigrants
- Costs of border security—and who pays—state, local, or federal?
- What are the obstacles confronting a prospective legal immigrant: money, time, other?