

## **AJC Applauds President Obama's Call for Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

January 29, 2013 – New York – AJC applauds President Obama's call today for swift Congressional action on legislation to permanently fix America's broken immigration system.

"The time has come for common sense comprehensive immigration reform," President Obama said in a speech in Las Vegas. "We define ourselves as a nation of immigrants. That's who we are, in our bones. The promise we see in those who come here from every corner of the globe, that's always been one of our greatest strengths. It keeps our workforce young. It keeps our country on the cutting edge. And it helped build the greatest economic engine the world has ever known."

President Obama outlined a four-part proposal for immigration reform: (1) continue to strengthen our borders; (2) crack down on companies that hire undocumented workers; (3) hold undocumented immigrants accountable before they can earn their citizenship, requiring undocumented workers to pay their taxes and a penalty, move to the back of the line, learn English, and pass background checks; and (4) streamline the legal immigration system for families, workers, and employers.

"AJC echoes the President's sentiments," said Richard Foltin, AJC's Director of National and Legislative Affairs. "Immigration is a key factor in bolstering America's economic strength and democratic pluralism."

President Obama's call to action comes in tandem with the proposed framework for comprehensive immigration reform announced yesterday by a bipartisan group of Senators. AJC welcomed the Senators' initiative.

"The President's proposed reforms to establish a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented and reform the legal immigration system, particularly with respect to the granting of family and employment visas, are encouraging," said Foltin.

"Bringing undocumented immigrants out of the shadows and allowing immigrant families to more easily reunite with their loved ones promotes a strong social fabric in our communities," Foltin continued. "In addition, making it easier for high and low-skilled immigrant workers to come to this country will help to ensure that American businesses have the labor they need to compete in a global economy. Also importantly, we commend the President for recognizing the importance of a fair and effective enforcement program that will respect the rule of law and protect our national security."

Since its founding in 1906, AJC has been outspoken in support of fair and generous immigration policies, characterized by the rule of law. Just as the President referenced today, as American Jews we recall how our parents and grandparents made their way to this country seeking a better life, and know that we have prospered in and contributed to this country. That same opportunity should be available for others.

AJC looks forward to working with the President, and Congress, in seeking to make 2013 the year for a genuine breakthrough on this critical issue.