

Bipartisan Immigration Action Signals Hope for Millions

WASHINGTON, DC - Just one day after a group of Senators released a landmark bipartisan plan, President Obama announced his intention to work with Congress on comprehensive immigration overhaul. The Jewish Council for Public Affairs welcomed both proposals and expressed a desire to work with the President and Congress to ensure passage of a comprehensive bill that will offer hope, security, and opportunity to millions of immigrants.

“This is welcome and exciting news for all Americans,” said JCPA Chair Larry Gold. “That these Senators were able to come together on a bipartisan basis to offer a proposal signals a seriousness of intent that may finally allow our nation to update and reform our immigration system. Undocumented workers will be able to leave the shadows and begin the path towards citizenship, and aspiring Americans will have new opportunities to immigrate the United States. The Senate’s plan embodies the best of our national aspirations – freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity – and offers a comprehensive and consensus set of policy proposals. The President issued a similar call today, and we are eager to work with both Republicans and Democrats, both Congress and the President, to finally see immigration reform passed. Not only will these proposals strengthen our country, but the bipartisan cooperation behind them could mean the start of a new era.”

The Senate plan, introduced by Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY), John McCain (R-AZ), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Michael Bennett (D-CO), and Jeff Flake (R-AZ) would create a path for citizenship for those currently in the country (pending a border security deal), reform the process for legal immigration, implement an employment verification system, and establish an improved process for admitting future workers.

“We are told in the Torah to be kind to the stranger among us because we were once strangers in Egypt; but we do not need to go back that far. We are a nation of immigrants and many in the Jewish community - and every community - are just a generation or two removed from immigrant roots. We understand from our own experiences what can be done to welcome the stranger and reduce the uncertainties and isolation of the immigrant experience. This must include the reunification of families,” said JCPA President Rabbi Steve Gutow. “Just as America benefitted from an influx of talent and passion before, the plans being discussed would open doors for new generations of immigrants to leave their mark on our country. Details, of course, remain to be worked out, but the thrust is clear. At the end of the day, and with bipartisan cooperation, the millions who came here to work and raise families with access to opportunity will finally gain the security to continue to live their lives as productive members of society without fear of arrest as they work towards citizenship.”

JCPA, the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, serves as the national coordinating and advisory body for the 14 national and 125 local agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations