

## **CRITERIA SHOULD FOCUS ON IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS**

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### **Body**

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THE United States has a vital interest in ending illegal immigration and reforming legal immigration to serve the interests of families, workers and taxpayers. Legislation I've introduced, the Immigration in the National Interest Act, would do that.

The legal immigration system is broken. Family unification is supposed to be the core of legal immigration. However, more than 1 million husbands, wives and minor children of U.S. permanent residents wait years for permission to join their immediate families. In the meantime, we continue to admit more than 120,000 adult brothers, sisters and children.

Furthermore, these adult immigrant categories are themselves heavily backlogged, with waits for admission from five to 40 years. The backlogs encourage illegal immigration.

The bipartisan Commission on Immigration Reform, chaired by the late Barbara Jordan, criticized these inequities. "Unless there is a compelling interest to do otherwise, immigrants should be chosen on the basis of the skills they contribute to the U.S. economy. While the admission of nuclear families and refugees provide such a compelling national interest, reunification of adult children and siblings of adult citizens do not reach that level," the commission said.

As the commission recognized, immigration should meet the needs of the American economy. Yet, more than 75 percent of recent immigration is by persons who have met no criteria based on education, job skills or even literacy.

My bill would result in admission for all immediate family members of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents. The percentage of immigrants admitted on the basis of skills and education will increase. Sponsors of immigrants will be held responsible to ensure that new arrivals do not become dependent on public benefits. Legal immigration will remain at historically high levels: an average of about 700,000 a year.

The legislation will ensure the prompt admission of those who are entitled to be admitted to the United States and the prompt exclusion and removal of those who are not so entitled. Nothing less will serve the national interests of the United States.

### **Notes**

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ANOTHER VIEW

Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, is chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims.

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