

What I Will Tell The President Tomorrow

By: Rep. Tony Cardenas, U.S. Representative for California's 29th District
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Tomorrow, members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus will meet with President Barack Obama, to discuss the importance of immigration reform. Meanwhile, only a couple miles away, the Republican Caucus of the House of Representatives will be deciding what their next step in this critical reform effort will be.

When I get to the White House with my colleagues, I'm going to have a message for the President.

It is time to stop talking with Republicans about winning elections, about the morally correct thing to do and about everything else except the one thing that all Republicans say they care about:

The bottom line.

Recently, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a long-awaited report on the economic impact of the comprehensive immigration reform legislation that passed the United States Senate. What we learned is something that supporters of immigration reform have known all along.

Immigration reform is good for our economy and will reduce our deficit.

According to the CBO, enacting reform would decrease the federal budget deficit by \$175 billion over the next 10 years and \$700 billion the next 10 years after that.

Workers who have been in the shadows will be required to pay taxes. Employers with undocumented workers on their books will be forced to play by the rules. A new crop of skilled, taxpaying workers will emerge in high need sectors.

With this report, we begin to see the truth; bringing 11 million hardworking men and women out of the shadows of our nation is not simply a moral adjustment; it is not only an attempt to help legitimize millions of relationships between employer and employee; it is a financial windfall for our economy.

Newly legal immigrants will bring with them a new demand for goods and services. By adding 11 million people to our legal workforce, the economy will supercharge a more robust recovery. The influx of a legal, fairly paid labor force, who exist in the mainstream of American life, outside the shadows, will increase consumption, encouraging business growth and hiring to respond to increased demand.

Earlier this year, the conservative Cato Institute issued a report that found comprehensive immigration reform would generate an annual increase in US GDP of nearly a full percentage point. This amounts to \$1.5 trillion in additional GDP over the next 10 years--a huge boost to our slow economic recovery.

For far too long, the immigration debate has been driven by myths and false rhetoric when it comes to the economic effects of immigration reform. Opponents claim that undocumented workers who start down a pathway to citizenship would suddenly overwhelm the social safety net, supposedly costing the nation untold sums of money.

Not only does this claim ignore new tax revenues and increased consumer spending by these immigrants, it also ignores a long history of immigrant success in our country. The immigrant story has never been one of stagnation. It is etched in sacrifice and achievement by successive generations. My parents came here from Jalisco, Mexico with 1st and 2nd grade educations to work as farmworkers. Through their hard work and belief, in all this country has to offer, they raised my ten siblings and me to dream bigger and achieve success beyond anything they could have imagined. I graduated college and became an engineer. My brothers and sisters became engineers, educators, and business owners with Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral degrees.

The important thing to remember is that my story is not unique. The American Dream is flush with stories of countless immigrants who have come here with nothing yet achieved great success. This is why comprehensive immigration reform will make such an economic difference.

Immigration has been and remains not only a critical part of who we are, but a lifeblood of our economy. We need these new workers to fill employer needs, start their own businesses, and buy our goods and services.

The non-partisan CBO report confirms this, though history has already shown this to be fact many times over.

Washington now faces a simple choice: Fix a systemic problem faced by our nation, with an intelligent, well thought-out comprehensive plan; or continue with the ineffective immigration system we are forced to operate under now.

Thanks to this nonpartisan agency, trusted by Congress to get the numbers right, we know that the economic arguments against comprehensive immigration reform are simply unfounded and not based on any economic facts.

I will tell the President exactly that tomorrow, and I'm going to ask him to do everything possible to send that same message to the American people, including House Republicans.

It's time we do the best thing we can, for our economy and our nation: send a comprehensive immigration reform bill to President Obama's desk.