



Practical solutions in reforming immigration

By: Gary Loveman – April 21, 2013

The Ya Es Hora national campaign has helped more than 1.4 million immigrants realize their dream of applying for U.S. citizenship. On Saturday, as part of the Ya Es Hora ¡Ciudadanía! (It's Time, Citizenship!) campaign, some 200 lawful permanent residents of Las Vegas received free assistance with citizenship applications, passport photographs and related legal services at the Rio. Since 2010, the Nevada Ya Es Hora Coalition has provided similar assistance to more than 2,100 people with the help of hundreds of volunteers. Caesars Entertainment and our workshop partners, the Human Rights Campaign and Mi Familia Vota Education Fund, are proud to help our fellow Las Vegas take these steps on the path toward full citizenship.

As rewarding and important as the workshop is, however, it also is a reminder of our nation's unsolved business when it comes to immigration reform. Passage of comprehensive, bipartisan immigration reform has eluded every American president since Ronald Reagan.

Ya Es Hora is a bright spot in the sometimes cloudy history of immigration in the United States. The case for comprehensive immigration reform is clear and its appeal should be bipartisan. According to the Cato Institute, comprehensive immigration reform likely would be a tremendous economic boon, estimated to increase GDP of the United States by as much as \$1.5 trillion over a decade by providing better protections to migrant workers and a consistent, reliable source of those workers to American businesses.

Comprehensive immigration reform is the key to attracting and retaining talented and educated immigrants to the United States. And it's a crucial component of improved border security.

Immigration reform also is crucial to Nevada's largest industries: casino gaming and hospitality. Countless lawful immigrants have worked toward achieving the American dream by procuring employment in the service sector, making the issue of immigration reform especially important to those of us in the commercial hospitality and gaming industry.

I had the honor of attending President Barack Obama's January address at Del Sol High School, where he made the case for fixing our country's immigration system. Since that address, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators has made substantial progress on crafting a comprehensive immigration reform program. Despite the bitter partisan divide in Washington on so many issues, I am encouraged by the progress made toward addressing this issue.

On Wednesday, the Senate filed its new bipartisan proposal on immigration. The proposal reflected four key principles the president believes should be included in comprehensive, common-sense reform:

- Continue to strengthen border security by improving infrastructure and technology at ports of entry, and facilitate public-private partnerships aimed at increasing investment in foreign visitor processing.
- Crack down on employers that knowingly hire workers living in the country illegally to gain advantage over businesses that play by the rules.
- Create a pathway to earned citizenship for the nearly 11 million immigrants currently living without permission in the borders of the U.S.
- Streamline legal immigration to ensure the system rewards anyone who is willing to work hard and legally complete the process. For the sake of the U.S. economy and national security, legal immigration would provide visas to foreign entrepreneurs looking to start businesses in the U.S., and help the most promising foreign graduate students in science and math stay in the U.S. after graduation. The proposal also would reunify families in a timely and humane manner.

From Einstein to the founders of Google to many of our families, neighbors and friends, immigrants have played a vital role in the dynamism and growth of this country. We should be encouraged that the tenor of the debate over immigration finally seems to reflect these truths.

This week's Ya Es Hora citizenship workshop is part of a larger campaign to bring practical, productive and humane solutions to immigration issues. As we watch the immigration debate begin in earnest in Congress, let's be sure to hold all immigration reform proposals to those same standards.