

The Miami Herald

Immigration reform: the final battle

By: Carlos Gutierrez, Republicans for Immigration Reform
May 20, 2013

Over the next few weeks, hundreds of thousands of international students will graduate from our universities and be sent back home by our broken immigration system — along with their ideas and talent. As we enter a new growing season, farmers across the country will be forced to cut back on production as they struggle to find adequate labor. And business owners will continue fighting against an economy that is still finding its way out of a recession.

We need common sense immigration reform and we need it now.

I have fought this battle before — professionally and personally. In 1960, I immigrated to the United States with my family from Havana. My parents fought to make a life for us here, creating the opportunities that allowed me to succeed. I fought again in 1993 when my wife and son obtained citizenship 14 years after my son was born. It took that long because I was a naturalized citizen and he was born overseas.

I fought in 2007 as President George W. Bush's Commerce secretary when I was on the front lines of the legislative fight — I was devastated when we failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform then. Which is why I have dedicated my work now to making sure that does not happen again. Those experiences have inspired me to launch Republicans for Immigration Reform, which works to provide political support to Republican candidates who seek to advance solutions in one of our country's most significant debates.

They have also inspired me to join the March for Innovation, the largest-ever virtual march on Washington in support of comprehensive immigration reform. On May 22-23, leaders from politics, business, sports, and entertainment will all come together to create a digital storm across a variety of social media to back bipartisan immigration legislation that will help attract and keep the world's best and brightest to fuel innovation and create American jobs.

Participants will partake in a pass-the-baton style event that will feature a number of different online venues including Huffington Post Live, Google Hangout, Twitter Town Hall, Facebook, LinkedIn, Reddit, Livestream, and others. All of this activity will help drive hundreds of thousands of people to www.MarchforInnovation.com, where they will be able to use social media and other digital tools to call on their U.S. senators to pass comprehensive immigration reform.

We need efforts like these to get Washington's attention. The bipartisan Group of Eight's bill will reorganize and secure U.S. borders, help our economy by welcoming talented

individuals into our communities, and create a system that can compete on the global stage.

And the numbers add up: According to the CATO Institute, comprehensive immigration reform will raise U.S. GDP by an estimated \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. And in the long run, research says that immigrants actually increase overall average incomes by increasing productivity.

Immigrants are also creating jobs, at a time when we need them most: They are more than twice as likely to start a business as native born citizens, according to the Partnership for a New American Economy. That helps explain why immigrants or their children founded 40 percent of this country's Fortune 500 companies.

Immigration reform is about investing in human capital and it is about investing in ourselves. Other countries understand this — right now, places like Australia and Canada are actively working to attract talented individuals who want to come here but face a broken and outdated system.

Together, we can create a better tomorrow for everyone who aspires to be a part of this great nation.

Carlos Gutierrez is vice chairman of the Albright Stonebridge Group and serves as chair of Republicans for Immigration Reform. He served as secretary of Commerce under President George W. Bush.