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## Fence Post

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### **GOP should back immigration reform**

I am a Republican who supports comprehensive immigration reform, and I am not alone. According to a recent poll, 86 percent of all voters support reform that: "secures the border, cracks down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and requires illegal immigrants to register for legal immigration status, pay back taxes, and learn English in order to be eligible for U.S. citizenship."

Conservative economists — including researchers at the **Cato Institute** — know that immigration is the engine that drives the economy. We need reform now more than ever to support honest businesses, raise wages for all, and open our economy to millions of new consumers.

I head the Illinois Green Industry Association. Every day, I talk to business owners who need reform to be able to keep their businesses afloat.

Opponents of reform in my party argue that the current system is an affront to the rule of law, and that we should not reward lawbreakers. I completely agree. The best way to restore the rule of law is to update a 45 year-old immigration system to reflect current realities.

At the Republican Party's inception over 150 years ago, anti-immigrant forces called the "Know Nothings" targeted Irish and German immigrants. Abraham Lincoln took a political risk and argued our party should welcome all Americans.

Again we seek to grow our party. We will not do so with anti-immigrant rhetoric. The American people want common-sense solutions that support small businesses, make us safer, and honor our religious faith. Those are the values of the Republican Party. That's why I and other Illinois Republicans are calling on Senator Durbin and the Republican Leadership in the Senate to pass tough, fair, and practical immigration reform this year.

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