

Statement of
The Honorable John Cornyn

United States Senator
Texas
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STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN CORNYN
Before the United States Senate Committee on Judiciary
Comprehensive Immigration Reform II
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Thank you, Chairman Specter, for holding this hearing today on a topic of great importance to the country and to my constituents. I appreciate your efforts to address this issue in the Committee and to grant all proposals and opinions equal consideration.

Since the last Full Committee hearing on Comprehensive Immigration Reform in July, the Governors of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona have all taken steps to address the prevalent crime and lawlessness that accompanies our broken immigration system. But at the end of the day, controlling our borders is a federal responsibility and long-term immigration reform will require federal action.

And so I look forward with great interest to the testimony of Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Chao. While it is unfortunate that they were unable to testify at the hearing in July, I know that much work is being done at both agencies. Their testimony is essential because none of us are interested in a solution that the Administration cannot implement or does not have the will to implement.

I have previously testified before this committee that immigration reform must be comprehensive and must combine increased enforcement of our laws with improved avenues for legal immigration. There is no question that we must authorize additional resources for enforcement of our immigration laws, and we must make substantive changes to existing laws so that the Department of Homeland Security may promptly remove aliens who have no legal right to enter or remain in the country.

I support efforts to pass legislation that will lead to greater control over our borders and am pleased with the increased funding for border security in the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill. But after chairing a half-dozen hearings related to our immigration system and hearing the testimony of numerous expert witnesses, I do not believe an "enforcement only" approach is the best policy. Not only will it adversely impact our economy, it is not the best use of our limited resources. I want our highly trained law enforcement officers going after the human smugglers, the felons, and the terrorists. By channeling economic migrants into legal channels, our law enforcement officers will be in a better position to identify gang members and to address the increasing number of illegal entrants from countries of special interest.

While I support reform that will create new legal channels and that will address the ten to twelve million aliens already here, Congress must work towards reform that will not perpetuate the problems that we have today. If we don't achieve circular migration, the most highly-motivated workers from other countries will continue their one-way migration - and our hope of improving the economic conditions of sending countries will be lost.

We must also balance the need to induce illegal aliens already here to come forwards and register with the pull that any such program will have on aliens who are not yet in the United States. We must evaluate each proposal not just by the participation rate of illegal aliens already here, but also on whether it will encourage a worker in El Salvador, Honduras or any other country to take the dangerous journey to the U.S. because he believes that he will benefit from the next round of immigration reform.

I believe that the bill that Senator Kyl and I have introduced strikes the appropriate balance. It proposes the most comprehensive plan for improving enforcement of our immigration laws, but it does not do so at the expense of our economy and our proud tradition of welcoming legal immigrants. It creates a new temporary worker category with a sufficient number of visas, and it provides a way to transition the existing population of undocumented workers into a legal status without granting them preferential treatment or allowing them to go through different processes.

I look forward to working with members of this Committee and with the Chairman to reach a long-term solution.

Thank you.