

Statement of  
**The Honorable Patrick Leahy**

United States Senator  
United States Senate  
July 26, 2011

**Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),  
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,  
Subcommittee On Immigration, Refugees And Border Security  
Hearing On "The Economic Imperative for Enacting Immigration Reform"  
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I thank Senator Schumer for chairing this hearing on the economic importance of enacting comprehensive immigration reform. The economic benefits of immigration reform are just one of the many reasons why I have strongly supported broad reforms to our immigration system for many years.

The United States loses too many talented foreign-born students who graduate from professional and other higher-education institutions in the United States. We must ensure that American companies have access to the well-trained and highly skilled individuals they need to stay at the leading edge of innovation and productivity. It is self-defeating to educate foreign-born men and women in our graduate schools and then erect a bureaucratic maze between these graduates and potential employment in the United States after they graduate. The loss of skilled graduates is particularly acute in the science and engineering fields. In testimony before Congress in 2005, Dr. William A. Wulf, President of the National Academy of Engineering, stated that one-third of all Ph.D.'s granted in the United States in the fields of science and engineering are awarded to foreign-born graduate students. I strongly support an increase in the number of H-1B visas offered to highly-skilled temporary workers each year.

In addition to creating a more sensible system for foreign workers who seek employment in the United States and those who seek their assistance, other reforms to our current system will pay dividends to our overall economy. The EB-5 Regional Center program is a mechanism that has generated capital investment in a time when lending has shrunk. Since its creation in 1993, the Regional Center Program has attracted more than \$1 billion and created tens of thousands of jobs in the United States. The program has paved the way for ski resort expansion and technology development in Vermont, energy development in Oklahoma and Texas, and the manufacture of alternative energy vehicles in Mississippi. But it needs permanence so that entrepreneurs and potential investors can have the confidence that this program will carry on. In my own state, the EB-5 program has had a significant, positive impact. Hundreds of jobs have been created, fueling economic growth in areas particularly hard hit by the economic crisis.

I appreciate the hard work of all of today's witnesses to help reform our immigration system. I want to offer my gratitude to Brad Smith, General Counsel of Microsoft, for the letter of support

his corporation sent to me recently endorsing S.821, the Uniting American Families Act. Microsoft and a long list of leading American corporations recognize that our immigration laws should treat all families equally, both because it is the right thing to do and because it is good for business. I greatly appreciate this support.

Recent years have been tough on our economy and even tougher on hardworking American families. The persistence of a dysfunctional immigration system compounds the economic challenges faced by our Nation. I have long believed that broad reform to this system could better meet the needs of our evolving economy in a responsible, productive way that both protects opportunities for American workers and strengthens American business.

A 2009 study published by the CATO Institute found that a broad legalization program for the undocumented would add approximately \$180 billion to our economy. The report found that legalization would lead to higher productivity for immigrants and create new jobs for Americans in skilled occupations. In addition, creating legal avenues for undocumented workers, and removing the incentives for the unlawful hiring and employment of foreign workers would help raise wages for all Americans.

The status quo on immigration is not sustainable. From multi-national corporations to Vermont dairy farms, I hear the constant plea for a more orderly, workable immigration system that can efficiently meet employment needs that often go unmet. We can do better. I am confident that Congress can enact responsible reforms to bolster our national economy, meet our humanitarian objectives, and protect opportunities for Americans.

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