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Senator Murkowski on Immigration

The topic of immigration, border security and what to do with the estimated 10 to 12 million illegal aliens residing in the United States remains a pressing issue before Congress and generates tremendous emotional response across the ideological spectrum. While many suggest this is an issue that must be dealt with in a comprehensive manner, I believe we are more likely to achieve success if the issue is broken down into manageable pieces.

Only when Congress proves that we will hold up our end of the bargain in providing for border security will the American people trust us to enact reforms to other areas of our immigration laws. I believe there are three main objectives we should first focus on: border security, workforce enforcement and reforming our temporary guest-worker programs.

It's clear to me that Congress and the administration must do more to ensure that the border security and enforcement measures currently in law are funded, implemented and executed. Congress has increased the number of border patrol and enforcement agents, as well as port-of-entry inspectors in recent years but more personnel are needed. I support increased funding for hiring and training more officers. I also support the increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles, motion sensors and other technologies to enhance our surveillance capabilities so we know who is crossing the border and when and where they are doing so. While constructing a border fence is appropriate in certain locations, by itself it will not prevent illegal entry in remote locations far away from population centers.

Congress must also increase workforce enforcement oversight. Under the laws of supply and demand, as long as employers are willing and able to hire undocumented workers, illegal aliens will continue to seek to enter the United States to gain employment. We must provide a simple and effective mechanism for employers to check the legality of workers they want to hire, and make sure those who knowingly seek illegal labor face stiff penalties as a result. We must establish an electronic employment eligibility verification system so that employers can use an Internet-based system to efficiently verify that the workers they hire are here legally.

I support reform of our temporary guest-worker programs. American companies should have the ability to hire the most competent employees they can in order to remain competitive in the global marketplace, but foreign workers should not be used to displace similarly qualified Americans. The U.S. Department of Labor must take a more proactive approach to their certification of lack of available labor, rather than rely on documents presented by the potential employer. This program should not be a path to citizenship, as the intent and mind-set of temporary workers is not the same as those who seek to adopt the United States as their home country.



With regard to undocumented aliens, I believe that those who illegally entered or remained in the United States should not be granted amnesty. Granting amnesty to illegal aliens sends the wrong message and is not fair to the vast majority of immigrants who abided by U.S. immigration laws. Granting amnesty would only encourage further illegal immigration.