



Talking Points:

Making the Case for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

The following talking points demonstrate how to use research-tested frame elements to craft messages that help the public to think more productively about comprehensive immigration reform. These frame elements include the values of Moral Argument, Pragmatism, and Prosperity; the Explanatory Metaphor Sail; and the combination of these elements in a Shared Prosperity Narrative. For more detailed descriptions of each frame element, see the Message Cards included in this toolkit. You can also read more about the research behind each frame element in the Research Resources section of the toolkit.

These talking points can be used flexibly: as a source of themes for longer written pieces, as short responses in media interviews or public appearances, or as set-ups to “pre-frame” a conversation on specific policy or program proposals. Each pulls from rigorously tested messages that have been shown to expand and shift public thinking on comprehensive reform. They need not be used word for word, but when adapting, communicators should take care to maintain the core frame elements in each and be cautious of the communications environment in which the discussion is taking place. For this reason, in this document, some talking points overlap—the repetition here illustrates how to use the same frame element in different ways.

Lead Off With **Moral Argument**

Our immigration policies should treat everyone with the compassion they deserve as human beings. No matter where we were born, we are all people and our immigration laws should recognize this. For example, our country should not separate immigrant parents from their children and should not put up barriers to college for immigrant students. Treating all people with compassion should guide our actions as we set out to improve our immigration system.

Pivot To **Pragmatism** To Undermine Frequently Recited Anti-Immigration Messages

We need a commonsense, practical approach to immigration reform. This kind of approach is possible when we carefully consider all possible ideas and then take action on those ideas that have the best chance of improving our country. It would be impractical and costly to send all the people who are in the country without documentation back to their country of origin. Rather than adopting extreme and impossible measures, lawmakers should use common sense as they craft policies to improve our immigration system.

Appealing to a **Shared Prosperity** narrative is another effective part of a pro-reform strategy. **Prosperity** as a value statement can build support for clear economic policies (e.g., reforming an employment-based visa system to respond to labor shortages).

Prosperity

America's prosperity can only grow if we channel everyone's skills and energy. Immigrants who come to the United States bring talent and potential and contribute to our national well-being. We need immigrants in order for our country to continue to grow and to thrive. Immigration reform is vital to our country's prosperity, both now and in the future.

Making The Case For Legalization Requires Explanation With A **Shared Prosperity** Narrative That Includes The **Sail** Explanatory Metaphor And Supporting Facts.

Immigration reform will help build and maintain our nation's shared prosperity. We can think of the immigration system like a sail on a boat. A sail works best when it is positioned to gather the wind it needs to move forward. And our immigration system should work the same way—we need to position it to include everyone's skills and energy. Right now we're limiting our nation's economic progress because not all people living in the United States are able to contribute fully.

Immigration reform can help the U.S. economy grow, because we would have a larger labor force, higher productivity and investment, stronger technology, more tourism, and more growth in the hospitality, agriculture and housing industries. In terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), growth

would increase by 3.3 percent over current projections within 10 years — an increase of roughly \$700 billion — and by 5.4 percent in less than 20 years — an increase of \$1.4 trillion.

Immigration reform will also help immigrants to become more stable members of our workforce. When that happens, they are able to invest in houses and cars, save more money and focus on long-term education. These are all steps that grow the economy and enhance worker productivity. Estimates indicate that immigration reform will increase average annual wages for every household in the United States by \$250.

Improving the immigration system would decrease budget deficits and offset the problems our country will face from an aging population. As immigrants become part of the legal economy, they pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits. The overall federal budget deficit would decrease by almost \$850 billion over the next 20 years. Immigrants would also boost Social Security's financial foundation by adding younger people to the U.S. workforce, meaning an extra \$300 billion in contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund over the next decade.

Now is the time to provide a clear way for people living here without documentation to become full citizens, without expecting them to wait for years or pay massive penalties. This way we can make sure we are using everyone's skills, talents and energy to help America thrive.