



Immigrants' Rights

Our country is a nation of immigrants. Immigrants have enriched our heritage and enlivened our culture. As millions of newcomers continue to work hard, raise families, serve in our armed forces, and study at universities, the Bush administration has waged an assault on immigrant's rights. Undocumented workers have been left in legal limbo, while local police forces have been pressured against their will to hunt down undocumented workers, which jeopardizes their relationships with immigrant communities. Thousands of immigrants have been detained in secret, denied due process, and deported.

In the economic sphere, undocumented workers have become convenient scapegoats. Yet the reality, as shown in study after study, is that they pay more in taxes — and contribute much more to our economy — than they receive in government services.

Welcoming immigrants to our shores is one of our country's vital traditions — the heart and soul of the American dream. We need to honor this welcoming legacy by legalizing the status of hard-working, tax-paying, undocumented workers who have come to America. To do so would clear out the backlog in the naturalization process so that those who are eligible may become citizens without endless delays. It would offer immigrants a clear road map to citizenship, so that they can become fully participating members of our communities.

We cannot continue with a system in which millions of workers and their families live in fear and are subject to economic exploitation. There is no place in our country for second-class status. It is time to restore respect for the rights and contributions of immigrants.

We must also work to help Mexico repair the damage done to its economy by passage of NAFTA. My first act as President will be to repeal NAFTA and restore a system of fair trade. If we improve the economies of our neighbors to the south, families there will not have to be torn apart to survive.

That, coupled with passage of HR 676 to provide single-payer, not-for-profit, universal health care for all residents of the United States, will take the health care burden off employers. Two things happen when you do that — employers can pay more in wages and American workers won't have to reject jobs that will not provide health care but will pay them just enough so they are not eligible for existing health care programs. True single-payer health care and fair trade are the keys to solving a large part of America's economic and immigration problems, and I am the only presidential candidate willing to do something about achieving both goals.

I oppose giving the Department of Defense control over border security. In our democracy, it is critical that we preserve the distinction between our armed forces and domestic law enforcement. Also, I am concerned about the threat of vigilantes intimidating or attacking individuals at the border. Border security is a job for state and local authorities, not soldiers or vigilantes.

I believe bilingual education is a valuable tool to help immigrants and other students with limited English proficiency. I support full federal funding of state and local bilingual education programs.

Obtaining high-quality education is a top goal for many of America's newcomers and they should receive all the help they can get. Offering in-state tuition levels for immigrant students is a good first step. But even in-state tuition is unaffordable for many families. The federal government should fully fund efforts to bring down the cost of higher education and expand America's commitment to public education. I advocate free undergraduate tuition at public institutions for all residents of the United States.

Federal anti-discrimination protection is a critical tool for promoting equality and justice in the workplace. I believe these laws must be preserved and, where they are insufficient, expanded to ensure that people of color have equal opportunities in the job market. Discrimination and harassment for any reasons must not be tolerated.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.