

## Policy Options: Path to Citizenship

A path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants would allow some already in the United States to legalize their status and eventually become eligible for citizenship. Some of the proposals before Congress don't provide any path to citizenship at all. Other proposals would allow some people to apply depending on how long they've been here, what kind of work they've done, and whether they've been convicted of a serious crime. Some other proposals, however, would permanently disqualify immigrants who make a mistake on a form or commit a less serious crime. Not everyone would be eligible and even if they were, they might have to:

- ◆ pay \$4,000 in fines and fees plus any back taxes,
- ◆ pass an English and civics test,
- ◆ wait up to eight years for a green card, and possibly many additional years for citizenship.

### Discussion Questions:

1. If people don't have a chance to be here legally, what do you think they'll do? If they can legalize their status, what do you think will happen?
2. Do you feel like there are unfair divisions in American society? Where do immigrants with green cards fit in, where do undocumented immigrants fit in, where do other groups fit in?
3. How would these proposed policy changes affect you or people that you know?

**For additional questions that help you think through different opinions, see *Questioning Immigration Proposals* on page 14.**

Do we want an underground society of 11 million people who are living in the shadows? I don't think so, and let's be realistic; we're not going to deport 11 million people. So, what I'm saying is let's deal with them, let's give them a path to legalization. So, people say, "Oh, you mean it's amnesty?" No, it's not amnesty. What we want is to make sure that these people are not criminals . . . that they have long-term jobs, they are paying taxes, they read and speak English. That's what we want.

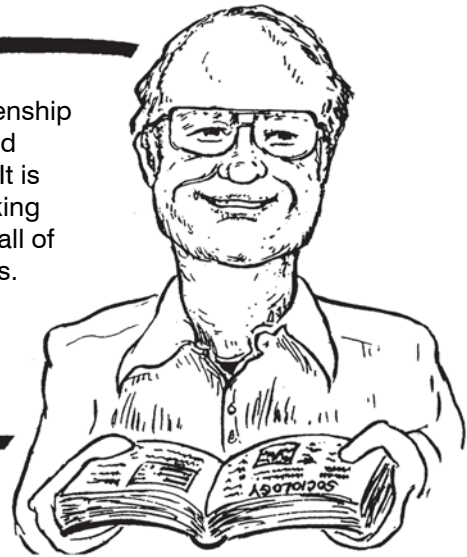
**Senator Harry Reid  
(D-NV)**



Illustrations by Ann Cleaves

In my view, the first step on the road to citizenship should not be to break the laws of the United States by entering our country illegally. . . . It is illogical to reward illegal immigrants by making them citizens. It is also a slap in the face to all of those legal immigrants who play by the rules.

**Theodore Fuller,  
Professor of sociology at Virginia Tech**



We shouldn't have two groups of immigrants: the privileged and the underprivileged. Almost all of the illegal immigrants come to work and pay taxes and become productive members of society. If the United States doesn't legalize immigrants, it would make two classes of society: those who are citizens or can be citizens and those who cannot. This would make an unfair division in American society.

**Kelly Reyes, Adult Education Student**

Legalization is an important worker protection. History shows that legalizing [undocumented immigrants] benefits all workers. . . . Without a legalization program, the economic incentive to hire and exploit the undocumented will remain . . . because all workers will see their working conditions plummet.

**From a statement by the  
ALF-CIO Executive Council**

