



STATEMENT
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THIS SOLVES NOTHING

WASHINGTON – Yesterday, a source close to the White House leaked what they claim is the administration’s plan to address immigration – a 10-point executive action that, among other provisions, would suspend deportation orders for up to 4.5 million unauthorized immigrants. ImmigrationWorks president Tamar Jacoby made the following statement.

Many reform advocates are celebrating, but the truth is this should be a sad day for anyone who supports a real fix for immigration.

The plan leaked yesterday will offer temporary relief to millions of immigrants and their families. But they may find it an empty promise. By acting unilaterally, the president guarantees that even pro-reform Republicans will push back – members of Congress are already looking for ways to defund and override what they see as an abuse of authority. So the reprieve is no safe haven – intended beneficiaries take it up at their own risk. And it will last only as long as there is someone in the White House who supports it.

Besides, even if the suspension of deportation works, it won’t address what’s broken about the immigration system – the underlying dynamic that has stranded millions of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S.

The problem that needs fixing is that under current law there is virtually no legal way for less-skilled foreigners to enter the country to work year-round. Even in the downturn, many industries depended on immigrants to fill unpopular, physically demanding or dangerous jobs, often working alongside more skilled Americans and keeping businesses open. When these workers can’t get in the front door, they come through the back door instead – illegally. And any true solution must go beyond a change of status for those already here: what’s needed is for Congress to create a way for needed foreign workers to enter the country legally.

Democrats and Republicans in Congress once seemed to understand this. Bipartisan majorities in the Senate have voted twice in the past decade to make the kind of fixes that would solve the problem once and for all, preventing illegal immigration, not just wiping the slate clean after the fact.

But apparently the political temptation has proved too strong for the president. He’d rather pull a political stunt and try to trap Republicans into looking bad.

If that’s the kind of legacy he wants, so be it. But let’s not give him credit for meaningful immigration reform.

ImmigrationWorks USA president Tamar Jacoby can be reached for comment at 202 506-4541.

ImmigrationWorks USA is a national federation of employers working to advance better immigration law. The network links major corporations, trade associations and state-based coalitions of small to medium-sized business owners concerned that the broken immigration system is holding back the nation’s economic growth. Their shared aim: legislation that brings America’s annual legal intake of foreign workers more realistically into line with the country’s labor needs.