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April 8, 2006

President's Radio Address

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THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. This week, Members of the United States Senate reached a promising bipartisan compromise on comprehensive immigration reform. Unfortunately, this compromise is being blocked by the Senate Democratic leader who has refused to allow Senators to move forward and vote on amendments to this bill. I call on the Senate Minority Leader to end his blocking tactics and allow the Senate to do its work and pass a fair, effective immigration reform bill.

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Immigration is an emotional issue and a vitally important one. At its core, immigration is the sign of a confident and successful nation. It says something about our country that people around the world are willing to leave their homes, leave their families, and risk everything to come to America. Their talent, hard work, and love of freedom have helped make America a vibrant, strong Nation. And by reforming our immigration laws to meet the realities of the 21st century, we will ensure that America remains a beacon of liberty for generations to come.

I made clear that a comprehensive immigration reform bill must include three elements:

First, comprehensive immigration reform must secure our borders. Since I took office, we've increased funding for border security by 66 percent, and Federal agents have apprehended and sent home more than 6 million people entering this country illegally, including more than 400,000 with criminal records. To improve security at the border, we're hiring thousands more Border Patrol agents; we're deploying new technologies like infrared cameras and unmanned aerial vehicles to help our agents do their jobs; we're installing physical barriers to entry, like fences in urban areas. We're making good progress, but we have much more work ahead to gain control of our border. I'll continue to work with Congress to strengthen border security, so we can prevent illegal immigrants from crossing our border and make the immigration system more orderly and secure.

Second, comprehensive immigration reform must strengthen the enforcement of our laws in America's interior. Since I took office, we've increased funding for immigration enforcement by 42 percent, increased the number of immigration enforcement agents and criminal investigators, enhanced worksite enforcement, and gone after smugglers, gang members, and human traffickers. A good immigration bill should enhance our ability to stop document fraud and help employers comply with our laws.

Finally, comprehensive immigration reform must include a temporary worker program that relieves pressure on our borders, while rejecting amnesty. A temporary worker program would create a legal way to match willing foreign workers with willing American employers to fill jobs that no American is available to do. By creating a legal channel for those seeking temporary work in America, we would reduce the number of people trying to sneak across the border. This would free up law enforcement officers to focus on criminals, drug dealers, terrorists, and others who mean us harm. A temporary worker program would also improve security by creating tamper-proof identification cards, so we can keep track of every temporary worker who is here on a legal basis and identify those who are not.

A new temporary worker program should not provide amnesty. Granting amnesty would be unfair to those who follow the rules and obey the laws. Amnesty would also be unwise, because it would encourage others to break the law and create new waves of illegal immigration. We must ensure that those who break our laws are not granted an automatic path to citizenship. We should also conduct the debate on immigration reform in a manner worthy of our Nation's best traditions.

To keep the promise of America, we must remain a welcoming society and also enforce the laws that make our freedom possible. As we do, our Nation will draw strength from the diversity of its citizens and unity from their desire to assimilate and become one people. By working together, we

can fix our immigration system in a way that protects our country, upholds our laws, and makes our Nation proud.

Thank you for listening.

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