



New, comprehensive blueprint, backing of key allies, raises hope for immigration reform

The current immigration system is so badly broken that, despite the tough economic times, the Obama administration [announced](#) last week that it will soon start work on “policy reform that controls immigration and makes it an orderly system.” While full details are yet to be developed, it is known that the President favors including a path to legal status for the undocumented and plans to put this issue on track for action this year.

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Fixing that broken system is the subject of a new report, [Immigration for Shared Prosperity: A framework for comprehensive reform](#), by Ray Marshall, and released today by the Economic Policy Institute. The framework grew from a [paper](#) by the former Labor Secretary, published two years ago as part of EPI's [Agenda for Shared Prosperity](#). That initial concept has been expanded and refined through consultation with interested and allied groups.

“Current immigration laws subject foreign workers to grave risks, exploitation, and uncertain futures, while depressing wages and working conditions for all workers. This framework addresses these defects,” said Marshall. “All workers will benefit from these reforms.”

Among the innovative concepts is the establishment of an independent commission to monitor industry trends and labor needs for future immigration. The commission would be part of an interconnected framework working with:

- A secure and effective worker authorization mechanism;
- Rational operational control of the border;
- Adjustment of status for the current undocumented population; and
- Improvement, not expansion, of temporary worker programs, limited to temporary or seasonal, not permanent, jobs.

This framework has been adopted by both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win. Given the new political climate in Washington, there are [hopes](#) that with a common sense plan and a united front, including labor and immigrant advocates, real reform can be implemented this year. Already there is support from unions, immigrant and civil rights leaders, community organizations and immigration experts. A series of symposia on conception and measurement problems related to occupational shortages are planned to strengthen the factual and analytical base of the report.

About the Author

Ray Marshall was Secretary of Labor in the Carter administration. He is Professor Emeritus and holder of the Audre and Bernard Rapoport Centennial Chair in Economics and Public Affairs of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. Marshall is one of the founders of the Economic Policy Institute, where he currently serves on its board.

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