THE WHITE HOUSE
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Myth/Fact: Ten Key Myths About the Border Security and Immigration Reform Agreement

In Focus: Immigration

White House News

1. MYTH: This is amnesty.

- **FACT**: Amnesty is the forgiveness of an offense without penalty. This proposal is not amnesty because illegal workers must acknowledge that they broke the law, pay a $1,000 fine, and undergo criminal background checks to obtain a Z visa granting temporary legal status.

- **FACT**: To apply for a green card at a date years into the future, Z visa workers must wait in line behind those who applied lawfully, pay an additional $4,000 fine, complete accelerated English requirements, leave the U.S. and file their application in their home country, and demonstrate merit based on the skills and attributes they will bring to the United States.

- **FACT**: Workers approved for Z visas will be given a temporary legal status, but they will not enjoy the full privileges of citizens or Legal Permanent Residents, such as welfare benefits and the ability to sponsor relatives abroad as immigrants.

2. MYTH: This proposal repeats the mistakes of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act.

- **FACT**: The 1986 Act failed because it provided amnesty for 3 million immigrants, did not adequately secure borders, did not include a workable employer verification system, and created no legal avenue to meet the labor needs of the American economy.

- **FACT**: This proposal addresses every one of the shortcomings from 1986:

    - No Amnesty: Illegal workers must acknowledge that they broke the law and pay a fine to be eligible for a Z visa.

    - Border Security: Border security benchmarks must be met before the Z visa and temporary worker programs go into effect. These triggers include: constructing 370 miles of fencing and 200 miles of vehicle barriers at the border and increasing the size of the Border Patrol to 18,000 agents.

    - Employer Verification System: An Employment Eligibility Verification System must be ready to process new hires before the Z visa and temporary worker programs go into effect.

    - Temporary Worker Program: A temporary worker program will relieve pressure on the border and provide a lawful way to meet the needs of our economy.

- **FACT**: The 1986 Act offered green cards after just 18 months, but under this proposal, green card applicants must meet a number of responsibilities – something which will take most candidates more than a decade.

3. MYTH: The government will not and cannot meet its promise to crack down on the hiring of illegal workers.

- **FACT**: Before the Z visa and temporary worker programs go into effect, an Employment Eligibility Verification System (EEVS) must be in place and ready to prevent unauthorized workers from obtaining jobs in the United States.

- **FACT**: Employers will be required to verify the work eligibility of all employees using the EEVS, and all workers will be required to present stronger and more readily verifiable identification documents. Tough new anti-fraud measures will be implemented to restrict fraud and identity theft.

- **FACT**: Employers who hire illegal workers will face stiff new criminal and civil penalties. For example, the maximum criminal penalty for a pattern or practice of hiring illegals will increase 25-fold, from $3,000 per alien to $75,000 per alien.

4. MYTH: This proposal would cut in half the amount of fence authorized by the Secure Fence Act of 2006.

- **FACT**: The Secure Fence Act of 2006 – which authorized the construction of hundreds of miles of additional fencing; more vehicle barriers, checkpoints, and lighting; and increased use of advanced technology – will remain unchanged.

- **FACT**: At least half of the additional fencing authorized by the Secure Fence Act must be built before the temporary worker program and Z visa could go into effect.

5. MYTH: The trigger period will cause a rush to the border.

- **FACT**: To be eligible to apply for a Z visa, illegal immigrants must prove they were in the country prior to January 1, 2007.

- **FACT**: Anyone caught crossing the border after the new law passes will be fingerprinted and permanently barred from receiving work or tourist visas from the U.S., creating a strong disincentive to illegal immigration.

6. MYTH: By providing an opportunity for citizenship to illegal immigrants already here, the bill will exponentially increase extended-family chain migration.

- **FACT**: The proposal reforms our immigration system to create a new balance between family connections and our national interests and economic needs.

- **FACT**: Visas for parents of U.S. citizens are being capped, while visas for siblings and adult children are eliminated.

- **FACT**: To help keep our economy competitive, a new merit-based system similar to those used by other countries will give preference to attributes that further our national interest such as: job offers in high-demand fields, ability to speak English, and education.

7. MYTH: The temporary worker program is bad for American workers.

- **FACT**: The temporary worker program relieves pressure on the border and meets our economic needs by allowing workers to enter the country to fill jobs that Americans are not doing.

- **FACT**: The program protects American workers by requiring U.S. employers to advertise the job in the United States at a competitive wage before hiring a temporary worker.

- **FACT**: To ensure "temporary" means "temporary," workers are limited to three two-year terms, with at least a year spent outside the United States between each term.

- **FACT**: A cap of 400,000 is set on the program, which can be adjusted up or down in the future depending on demand.

8. MYTH: Illegal immigrants will come out of the shadows and on to the welfare rolls.

- **FACT**: Z visa workers are not entitled to welfare, Food Stamps, SSI, non-emergency Medicaid, or other programs and privileges enjoyed by U.S. citizens and some Legal Permanent Residents.

- **FACT**: In order to apply for and maintain Z visa status, workers must remain employed.

9. MYTH: Government agencies will not be able to share information to pursue immigration violators.

- **FACT**: Under this proposal, there will be unprecedented information sharing between Federal, State, and local agencies to ensure that immigration laws are respected and enforced.

- **FACT**: The new Employment Eligibility Verification System, which employers will be required to use for all employees, will rely on unprecedented information sharing across Federal and State databases, including Social Security records, passport and visa records, and State driver's licenses.

- **FACT**: For Z visa applicants, DHS has authority to share information with law enforcement about terrorist aliens, security risks, and criminal aliens, including aliens who lie on their applications and aliens who commit fraud.

- **FACT**: Under this proposal, DHS will receive Social Security Administration "no match" information on individuals and information on multiple uses of the same social security number by more than one individual.

10. MYTH: Senators are being asked to vote Monday on a lengthy bill that they will not have time to read.

- **FACT**: Monday's vote is only a procedural vote to bring the bill to the floor for debate, not a vote on the bill itself.

- **FACT**: This bill is the product of months of extraordinary negotiations between Senators from both parties and Cabinet-level officials.

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