

## Immigration

Immigrants have always played a vital role in the development of our country and contributed to our culture, economy and political landscape. However, the government must take all necessary steps to stop illegal immigration.

An estimated 36 million foreign-born people reside legally and illegally in the United States. Over 35% of the people in the Congressional District I represent are foreign born.

### Effective Immigration Reform

In recent years, the United States has typically admitted 600,000 to 1 million aliens annually, giving them the status of "Legal Permanent Resident" (LPR). I believe the lives of both immigrants and non-immigrants are enriched by living in our pluralistic society. Except for Native Americans, everyone in the U.S. is an immigrant or descendant of an immigrant. I support effective immigration reform that recognizes legal immigrants who have worked hard, paid taxes, and contributed to our society and ensures that the immigration process, on which the U.S. has been built, is strengthened.

### Strengthening Immigration Security Controls in the Wake of 9/11

While I believe that immigrants who have taken the proper steps to obtain the status of Legal Permanent Resident should be embraced by our country with open arms, those immigrants who choose to break the law to gain admittance to our country should not be rewarded for their illicit actions. In order to protect against illegal immigration, the U.S. government must strictly enforce its immigration policy and secure our nation's borders. That is why for example, I have voted in favor of increasing the number of Border Patrol agents to protect our borders.

The tragedy of September 11, 2001 has forced our nation to strengthen immigration security controls such as background screenings and visa processing for people trying to gain access to our country, as well as tightening border security. The fact that the 9-11 terrorists entered the country illegally, overstayed their visas,

and eluded the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) illustrates that illegal immigration constitutes much more of a threat than any losses that can be counted in dollars.

## Challenges Posed by Illegal Immigration

While the issue of illegal immigration has come to our attention as a security risk to Americans, it is also a drain on our country's limited resources. The enormous size of the undocumented illegal immigrant population in the U.S. poses several unique challenges. While it is difficult to ascertain the precise net cost of illegal immigration to the federal government, estimates range from several billion to tens of billions of dollars a year in education, medical care, and incarceration expenses--not to mention increased border control funding. However, despite common myth, illegal immigrants cannot access federal benefits, such as Social Security, unless they do so through fraudulent methods. It is estimated that more than ten million illegal immigrants are currently living in the United States, and approximately 221,000 of them reside in New Jersey.

## Legal Immigrants Should Not Face Unreasonable Burdens

Some of the recent issues dealt with by Congress have placed unreasonable burdens on legal immigrants. I heeded the concerns of many of my constituents and voted against the REAL ID Act, which puts in place certain federal standards for the issuance of a state driver's license, makes it more difficult for foreign nationals to claim asylum, and authorizes the completion of a security fence along the U.S.-Mexico border. However, the text of the REAL ID Act was eventually rolled into a must-pass spending bill, which became law in 2005.

Please know that I will be working very hard to strike a balance in reforming the immigration process in our country to ensuring that individuals who wish to harm Americans are barred from entering our country, while at the same time, ensuring that the legal immigration process, on which the United States has been built, is strengthened to provide for the further enrichment and development of our nation.

My district offices in Hackensack and Jersey City provide assistance to immigrants who have recently emigrated to the U.S. and have applied to become full U.S. citizens. We can be reached at (201) 646-0808.

[Click here to read related news](#)