



White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
FACT SHEET: COMMONSENSE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND THE AAPI COMMUNITY

President Obama made it clear that commonsense immigration reform is a priority, and recognizes that the current system is broken. It is time to discuss the need to fix the broken immigration system so that everyone plays by the same rules. The President and his Administration recognize that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) contribute greatly to the economy, diversity, and cultural landscape of the United States and that many AAPIs and immigrants of Asian descent are affected by our immigration laws and policies.

WHAT IS THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S PLAN TO FIX THE BROKEN IMMIGRATION SYSTEM?

President Obama's commonsense immigration reform plan has four principles: strengthen our borders; crack down on employers hiring undocumented workers; hold undocumented immigrants accountable before they can earn their citizenship, including payment of taxes, learning English, and passing background checks; and streamline the legal immigration system for families, workers, and employers. Read more about the President's plan at www.whitehouse.gov/immigration.

The Administration also supports the *DREAM Act*. Children brought here illegally through no fault of their own by their parents will be eligible for earned citizenship. By going to college or serving honorably in the Armed Forces for at least two years, these children should be given an expedited opportunity to earn their citizenship.

The President's plan also seeks to keep families together by eliminating existing backlogs in the family-sponsored immigration system by recapturing unused visas and temporarily increasing annual visa numbers. The proposal also raises existing annual country caps from 7 percent to 15 percent for the family-sponsored immigration system. It also treats same-sex families as families by giving U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents the ability to seek a visa on the basis of a permanent relationship with a same-sex partner. The proposal also revises current unlawful presence bars and provides broader discretion to waive bars in cases of hardship.

WHO ARE WE?

Of the over 4 million individuals on the family immigrant visa backlogs waiting list, over 40% are from an Asian country and of the over 130,000 individuals waiting in the employment immigrant visa backlogs, over 80% are from Asian countries. Individuals from the Philippines, China, India, and Vietnam have among the highest number of family members in the family immigrant visa backlogs, representing decades of delayed family reunification. Immigrants from the Philippines, India, China, and South Korea make up the majority of those waiting to enter the U.S. through the employment-based immigration system.

Thousands of young AAPIs have applied to USCIS' Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which defers immigration enforcement for a period of two years. As of February 2013, USCIS has received 5,599 applications from individuals born in South Korea and 3,241 applications from individuals born in the Philippines.

In 2011, approximately 58% of the refugees admitted to the United States were from Asian countries. In 2011, the U.S. resettled 168,460 refugees, 45% (97,031) of whom came from Asian countries, most notably from Burma and Bhutan, two countries that produced the second and third highest number of refugees, respectively, after Iraq.

AAPIs naturalize at the highest rates of those who choose to become American citizens. Since 1980, individuals from India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and China have ranked among the **top five** nationalities to apply for and receive U.S. citizenship.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For more information on the President's commonsense immigration reform framework, visit www.whitehouse.gov/immigration.

To apply for naturalization or for grants to enhance immigrant integration, visit the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Citizen Resource Center](http://www.uscis.gov) at www.uscis.gov.

To learn more about how the federal government assists refugees, visit the [Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/) at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/ and the [Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration](http://www.state.gov/j/prm/) at www.state.gov/j/prm/.

To learn more about the Administration's immigration priorities, offer feedback, or get more engaged in our work, please visit www.whitehouse.gov/aapi.