

Statement from the American Immigration Council on Secretary Janet Napolitano's First Speech on Immigration Reform

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Washington D.C. - Today, in her first speech on immigration reform, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano [spoke](#) in great detail about the security and enforcement measures that her agency has taken under her tenure to enforce current immigration laws, but she noted "the more work we do, the more it becomes clear that the laws themselves need to be reformed."

Speaking at the [Center for American Progress](#), the Secretary laid out her belief that her agency has done its part to secure the border, a major concern for Congress and the public during the last round of immigration debates in 2007, but that enforcement without comprehensive reform was falling short. "While it's important to emphasize the need for immigration reform from an enforcement perspective, the need for reform stretches far beyond those reasons. We have to make sure the immigration system works to support American families, businesses and workers," said the Secretary.

DHS is also ready to implement reform according to the Secretary who noted "We've ended a year-long backlog for background checks on applicants for green cards and naturalization. We've expanded the opportunity for a widow to gain legal status here, despite the untimely death of her U.S. citizen spouse. We've launched a new interactive website that allows people to receive information about the status of their immigration cases by email or text message, and we have reduced the time it takes to process those cases."

The Secretary concluded "at the end of the day, when it comes to immigration, people need to be able to trust the system. Americans need to know that their government is committed to enforcing the law and securing the border - and that it takes this responsibility seriously. Law enforcement needs to have better legal tools and the necessary resources to deal with border-related and immigration-related crime. Businesses must be able find the workers they need here in America, rather than having to move overseas. Immigrants need to be able to plan their lives - they need to know that once we reform the laws, we're going to have a system that works, and that the contours of our immigration laws will last. And they need to know that they will have as many responsibilities as they do rights...This Administration does not shy away from taking on the big challenges of the 21st century, challenges that have been ignored too long and hurt our families and businesses."

Ben Johnson, Executive Director of the [American Immigration Council](#) attended the speech and noted, "Napolitano's speech today evidenced a real understanding by the Administration of the comprehensive policy prescriptions necessary to reform a broken system. Although she continues to express support for many enforcement policies - such as local enforcement of federal laws - that have proven to do more harm than good, she rightly acknowledged that it is time to move beyond the enforcement-only strategy of the past 10 years and begin the process of fixing the system. Her clear statement on the value of immigrants to our society and

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economy, and the important role that immigration reform can play in building a foundation for growth and prosperity is a welcome response to the angry, misinformed rhetoric that has otherwise clouded the debate on immigration."

To watch a video of Secretary Napolitano's speech visit www.AmericanProgress.org

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For more information contact: Wendy Sefsaf at 202-507-7524 or wsefsaf@immcouncil.org.