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President Obama's Moment to Reassert Federal Leadership on Immigration Reform

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Washington, D.C. - Tomorrow, Thursday, July 1st, President Obama will make what is being [described](#) by the *New York Times* as “a major speech on immigration” at American University in Washington, D.C. The President is expected to step forward to reassert the leadership of the Federal Government on the issue of immigration.

While a federal lawsuit against Arizona's SB1070 now seems imminent, the President must address the underlying issues that led to passage of the Arizona law. We hope the President will squarely address the public's frustration with a lack of workable solutions on immigration. He must place this frustration in context—lack of federal action leads to growing impetus in the states to pass laws, no matter what their cost, simply to try to resolve the impasse. The President should address this frustration, but should also address the undisputed polling that shows that Americans want comprehensive immigration reform. This can be his moment to bring people together by laying out a framework that will actually move Congress to complete workable legislation.

We also hope that the President avoids some of the typical election chatter on immigration, which tends to turn the issue into a political contest of who can talk the toughest. Rarely does the debate move beyond the issue of further fortifying our southern border. While border security is a necessary component of comprehensive immigration reform, we cannot stop there. Real reform must look past campaign politics and find solutions that will allow communities to live and work together without the anger and recriminations that have dominated this issue for years. We hope the President's speech will go beyond issues of border security and discuss with the same enthusiasm strategies to create a 21st century immigration system—a system which invests in ideas and programs that support family and community cohesion, promotes fairness and individual accountability, supports immigrant integration, and helps us attract the best and brightest from around the world.

“The crisis in Arizona was created by an absence of leadership and commitment by the Federal Government to fix our broken immigration system. My hope is that the President will use this speech as an opportunity to reassert federal authority over immigration law and policy, and lay out his vision for a path forward,” said Benjamin Johnson, Executive Director of the American Immigration Council, who will attend the speech on Thursday. “Enforcement of our laws is important, but the President must rise above the angry and misguided political rhetoric that creates and then feeds a never-ending appetite for punishment. While a lawsuit by the Department of Justice is a necessary legal step, a lawsuit alone will not end the vacuum created by the lack of workable immigration laws and

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leadership to make that a reality. Over the last year, the President and his administration have expressed a willingness and desire to pursue a comprehensive reform strategy. Sadly, too few politicians have had the courage to stand with him on this important issue. The true measure of the President's commitment to this issue is whether he will create his own strategy for moving reform forward and whether he will expose those in both parties who refuse to step forward and create a workable, humane immigration policy that will strengthen America.”

As the Department of Justice takes up the legal challenge, President Obama—through this speech and continuing actions—can place the responsibility for immigration reform back where it constitutionally belongs: in the hands of the Federal Government.

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