

# Talking Points on Citizenship and Reconciliation

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## Toplines

- The anti-DACA court ruling adds a new layer of urgency to the need for congressional action. Republicans and the judges sympathetic to Republicans are determined to eliminate DACA, so we need a permanent solution, not just for every Dreamer, but for farmworkers, TPS holders and essential workers, as quickly as possible this year. Now is the time.
- The human infrastructure reconciliation package includes a pathway to citizenship for immigrant workers and their families. The relentless organizing of the pro-immigrant movement over the years has made this possible. The leadership of champions in the House and Senate has made this possible. The support of the President has made this possible. Now is the time. This is the year.
- To Build Back Better we have to make sure everyone is included, particularly those traditionally left behind. Along with jobs, care, and climate, citizenship for immigrant workers and families is an integral part of the recovery package that Congress must enact this year.
- Citizenship for immigrant youth, TPS holders, farm workers and essential workers has overwhelming bipartisan public support—including from majorities of independents and Republicans.
- Along with investments in jobs, care and climate, the investment in citizenship propels economic growth, creates jobs and increases wages for all Americans.
- We are confident that citizenship for immigrants will qualify for the human infrastructure package under the budget reconciliation rules and we have no time to waste. There is precedence for including immigration in the reconciliation process. However it is enacted, it needs to happen this year and reconciliation is the clearest path forward right now.
- The political moment to pass a citizenship bill is now. It's been 35 years since the last meaningful pathways to citizenship legislation in Congress. And after four years of continuous and relentless attacks on undocumented communities - even while they played instrumental roles in keeping the country alive and moving during a global pandemic - it's time to act. There is no moral and economic recovery without including immigrants.

## Key Points

**Citizenship for immigrant workers and families is an integral component of the human infrastructure package Democrats are preparing to enact this year.**

- **5 million strong.** More than [5 million](#) undocumented immigrants have made immeasurable sacrifices risking their lives as “essential workers” during the worst public health crisis in our lifetime. In fact, more than [two-thirds](#) of all undocumented immigrant workers serve in frontline

jobs in essential industries - healthcare, home care, transportation, agriculture, food production, construction and other industries.

- **“Essential” and “deportable?”** It is both contradictory and harmful to the recovery of the U.S. Today, in America, millions of immigrant workers are considered “essential” and “deportable” at the same time.
- **It’s Time.** Essential workers without permanent status to be recognized as the Americans they already are. They have been here for all of us, now it’s time for all of us to be there for them.

**A reconciliation bill that includes citizenship for immigrant youth, TPS holders, farm workers and other essential workers will boost economic growth, create jobs and increase wages for all Americans.**

- **Boosts GDP for all.** According to noted scholars writing for the Center for American Progress, providing a pathway to citizenship for Immigrant youth, TPS holders, farm workers and other essential workers would boost GDP by a cumulative total of [\\$1.5 trillion over 10 years](#).
- **Creates new jobs for all.** Similarly, including citizenship in the package would, over a period of 10 years, [create over 400,000 new jobs](#).
- **Raise wages for all.** For undocumented workers, inclusion in the human infrastructure package would mean a 31% increase in wages over 10 years. All other workers would see an [increase in wages by \\$600](#). Everyone deserves to have a living wage and raising wages is a popular demand from everyone.
- **Level playing field for all.** When undocumented immigrants gain permanent status, it helps to create just system for all workers and decent employers. As immigrant and U.S.-born workers stand together to demand better wages and working conditions, it rewards upstanding employers who pay fair wages, and undercuts unscrupulous employers who exploit undocumented workers.
- **Local growth.** A [report by FWD.us](#) finds that “many states stand to increase their GDP by several billion dollars if undocumented immigrants were provided a pathway to citizenship. Similarly, most Congressional districts would stand to grow their economies by hundreds of millions of dollars.” The report estimates that undocumented immigrants would contribute an added \$149 billion of spending power each year to the U.S. economy if they were U.S. citizens. According to [New American Economy](#), immigrants keep America moving forward by allowing an influx of tax dollars, totaling approximately \$500 billion annually.

**A pathway to citizenship for immigrant youth, TPS holders, farm workers and other essential workers has overwhelming bipartisan support—including from majorities of Independents and Republicans.**

- **There is a large and consistent consensus for reform.** In [battleground states](#), a pathway to citizenship proposals remains incredibly popular. As indicated in nearly every national poll on the issue, there is widespread public support (at least around 70%) for various pathways to citizenship proposals facing Congress.

- **Pathway to citizenship proposals remain supported by a strong majority of voters including** pathways to citizenship for Dreamers (71% support/22% oppose), farmworkers (71%/21%), and for those with Temporary Protected Status (68% support/22% oppose). Notably, there is minimal opposition to all of these proposals. For example, just 12% strongly oppose a pathway to citizenship for farmworkers.
- **Across these Senate battlegrounds, 73% of voters say their own United States Senator should vote for these citizenship proposals.** Only 27% say their Senator should vote against them. Further, there is a political price to pay for Senators who stand in the way -- 50% of voters say they are less likely to vote for a Senator who blocks these bills, while only 29% say they would be more likely to vote for a Senator who blocks these bills.
- **After 30 years of promises, voters want results.** If Democrats succeed, they will get most of the credit. If they fail, they will get most of the blame. In particular, base Democrats who candidates need to show up in the 2022 midterms will be upset if undocumented immigrants remain vulnerable to deportation. Failure is not an option. This is the year.
- **With the anti-DACA court ruling, it is clear it is up to Congress to act and act now.** But protecting DACA recipients is not enough because other young immigrants, farmworkers, TPS holders and essential workers would remain vulnerable to deportation. Given the Republican obstruction, it is on Democrats to protect American communities and American families by protecting immigrants from deportation and enacting a path to citizenship.

**We are confident citizenship for immigrants will qualify for a budget reconciliation bill.**

- **Budgetary impact.** A major requirement for a measure to be included in a reconciliation bill, it has to have a budgetary impact. According to the [Senate Budget Committee](#), immigration reform is estimated to have a budget impact of approximately \$150 billion for pathways to citizenship.
- **Strong precedent.** The Senate has included immigration reform in reconciliation before. In [2005](#), the Republican-controlled Senate overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan reconciliation bill that dramatically increased the number of immigrant green cards. The budget reconciliation process has been used multiple times throughout history for major legislation including health care reform and tax legislation.
- **Republican bad faith.** Republicans continue to obstruct efforts by Democrats in Congress to deliver citizenship for millions of immigrants who are American in all but paperwork. They use the cover of bipartisan discussions to do what Mitch McConnell wants: delay, divide and derail Democrats so Republicans can regain power. Democrats are in the majority, and they should use every ounce of their power to ensure that citizenship for immigrant workers and families is part of the budget reconciliation process.
- **A recovery for all.** As Democrats prepare a budget resolution to start the budget reconciliation process to enact the human infrastructure package this year, citizenship needs to be included along with jobs, care, and climate in order to achieve a recovery that is truly equitable and inclusive for all, regardless of background or birthplace. It's time for *We the People* to truly include all of us.

## Background

- **A two-track strategy to build back better.** As part of President Biden's *Build Back Better* strategy, Democrats in Congress are pursuing a two-track strategy: a "hard infrastructure" package that will focus on bridges, tunnels and highways; and a "human infrastructure" package that will focus on jobs, care, climate and citizenship. The hard infrastructure package has some bipartisan support, although under the Senate filibuster, 10 Republicans will have to join with all 50 Democrats to meet the 60 vote threshold. It's fate remains uncertain. The human infrastructure package is opposed by all Republicans.
- **Let's pass both hard infrastructure and human infrastructure.** To pass the hard infrastructure package, Senate Majority Leader Schumer is calling for votes in July to determine if Republicans are serious about enacting something, anything on a bipartisan basis. To pass the human infrastructure package, Democrats are initiating a legislative process called "budget reconciliation." Let's hope that, should Republicans fail to support it, hard infrastructure is added to the human infrastructure package.
- **Through a process called "reconciliation," Democrats can transform America's human infrastructure.** Reconciliation means that certain bills that meet certain rules are exempt from the 60 vote threshold required by the filibuster. Bills that go through the reconciliation process can pass with a simple majority. It's a process that is used by both parties on a regular basis. Republicans used it during the Trump presidency to pass tax cuts for the wealthy and to pursue legislation to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. Earlier this year, Democrats used reconciliation to enact into law the very popular and very successful COVID-19 relief package. In the Senate, it passed because 50 Democrats voted for it. Not one Republican voted for the COVID relief package.

## Q/A

### **How is it possible to include citizenship in the budget reconciliation process? Is there precedent?**

The Senate has included immigration in reconciliation before. In [2005](#), the Republican-controlled Senate overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan reconciliation bill that dramatically increased the number of immigrant green cards. The budget reconciliation rules require measures to have a significant budgetary impact, and according to the [Senate Budget Committee](#), immigration reforms in the human infrastructure package will have an impact of \$150 million.

Budget reconciliation is a process that has been used by both parties. For example, under Trump, Republicans used budget reconciliation to enact the \$1.9 trillion tax cuts that primarily benefited the wealthy and corporations, and they used reconciliation to try to get rid of the Affordable Care Act (it failed because Sen. John McCain voted no). Democrats used reconciliation earlier this year to pass the popular and successful COVID-19 rescue plan.

### **What if the parliamentarian does not agree with you?**

We are optimistic the parliamentarian will greenlight the inclusion of immigration in the infrastructure package, but the important part is now *how* it is done but *that* it is done.

As [Rep. Adriano Espaillat \(D-NY\)](#) says about making it work so citizenship passes muster with the parliamentarian, “We will have a Plan A, a Plan B, a Plan C and a Plan D. We’re not just sticking to one scope of how many folks would be impacted. We’ll try to include as many folks as possible.”

With majorities in both chambers in Congress, Democrats must use every available means to get citizenship across the finish line with the votes they have.

### **Why not a bipartisan approach? Aren’t senators engaged in bipartisan discussion?**

Bipartisanship requires both parties to negotiate in good faith. Unfortunately, Republicans are not interested in fixing our broken immigration system this year, they are gearing up to run on an anti-immigrant platform next year.

A bipartisan approach to immigration reform has been tried repeatedly. And it has failed repeatedly, primarily because of Republican opposition. Bipartisan bills were fought over in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2017, and 2018. Every time, Democrats stretched to find common ground. And every time the vast majority of Republicans opposed the compromise.

Michigan Sen. Debbie Stabenow, the No. 4 Democratic leader was recently asked about bipartisanship on immigration reform [by Politico](#). She said, “It’s very, very difficult to get Republicans right now. Even those who were around showing leadership in 2013 are very hesitant to step up. Unfortunately, in the world we are in, with Sen. McConnell trying to slow down and stop everything, this is our best option.”

An overwhelming bipartisan majority of voters want Congress to enact citizenship bills. Democrats control the White House and the majority in both chambers of Congress. This is the year. Reconciliation is the way.

### **Will you have the support of all Democrats, including Senators Manchin and Sinema?**

We are confident that all Democrats in the Senate support immigration reform with pathways to citizenship. Senator Manchin has already [indicated his support](#), saying he’s “fine” with it. He added, “I’m a 2013 immigration supporter. You can look at the 2013 bill and I thought that was a great bill. If we had that bill then, we wouldn’t have the problems we’d have today.”

Senator Sinema comes from a state where many of her voters care deeply about immigration reform. The Democratic party is a pro-immigrant party, and understands the time has come to recognize the heroic contributions of immigrant workers during the pandemic, to include all workers and families in the recovery, and to do so in a way that benefits all Americans.

### **Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR) recently [appeared](#) on Fox News and argued the border should come first. He said the “crisis is about to get a lot worse” if Democrats “include a massive amnesty” in the upcoming budget reconciliation bill. How do you respond?**

We expect to hear a lot more of this kind of bullying from Republicans and conservative media in coming days and weeks. They know the public, including a majority of Republican voters,

supports pathways to citizenship, so they are reverting to the same “border first” excuse they have used for years to oppose such measures.

Democrats need not fear the “border first” excuse. The American public rejects the “border first” argument and wants progress on citizenship and a safe and well-managed border. A recent NPR piece on [NPR/Ipsos polling](#) is headlined, [Despite Concerns About Border, Poll Finds Support For More Pathways To Citizenship](#). “Americans are becoming increasingly concerned about the situation at the border and the number of migrants coming in, but at the same time, many are still in favor of reforming the system,” said Mallory Newall, a research director at Ipsos. “We see support for allowing law-abiding migrants to become citizens...”

The poll found that 71% of Americans support citizenship for “farmworkers and other essential workers (61% of Republicans); 70% support citizenship for TPS holders (60% of Republicans); and 66% support citizenship for “undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children” (54% of Republicans). While 79% of the public believes “the current situation at the border is a problem,” views are more complex than the GOP’s “keep em all out” position: 73% are concerned about “ensuring proper care for unaccompanied migrant children detained at the border” and 60% are concerned about “reuniting migrant families who were separated at the border by the Trump administration.”

**In the 2022 midterms Republicans say they will attack Democrats for what they call a “border crisis” and what they say will be “amnesty.” Should Democrats in tough races in 2022 be concerned?**

No. Trump and the GOP nationalized the 2018 midterms and suffered the biggest midterm defeat in American history. Trump ran on nativism in 2020 and lost to Joe Biden, the pro-immigrant candidate, by 7 million votes. Americans want solutions, not division; humanity, not cruelty; fairness, not family separation.