

NHLA Voices on Executive Action

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Washington, DC - Last night's momentous address to the nation by President Barack Obama is a life-transforming event for millions of undocumented immigrants and families to remain united, step out of the shadows, fully contribute to the life of our communities and the nation, and find protection from further exploitation.

This hard-won victory is the culmination of years of activism and advocacy, from cities and towns across the nation, bringing further proof to the power of a people united. NHLA and its member organizations worked toward this day in their capacities as lawyers, community activists, labor organizers, business owners, health advocates, artists, educators, and more. This is a coalition we can all be proud of.

Even as we rejoice about the progress that you and all of us made possible, we know that the President's executive actions do not bring relief from deportation to all who deserve it, and that access to health services for those benefiting from affirmative relief remain to be won.

Our advocacy does not end today. We will continue our work to urge Congress to take humane, robust and comprehensive bipartisan action to permanently reform our dysfunctional immigration system. We will continue to weigh in with the President on how to further improve upon the great leap he took this week. And we will be able to do all of this knowing that we're doing it together with you.

Sincerely,

Hector Sanchez

Below are statements from NHLA Members

"After more than 13 years of failing to pass comprehensive immigration reform, this executive action by the President points the way for Congress and the Administration to work together on behalf of the national interest without further delay." -- **Antonio R. Flores, President and CEO, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities**

"In making this announcement, President Obama acts in a tradition of executive leadership extending back decades in the context of immigration regulation and centuries in the inherently related context of international relations. It is appropriate and necessary that the President exercise his undoubted constitutional and statutory authority to implement affirmative immigration relief. The President's action builds upon the previous – and markedly successful – affirmative relief program of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). It is our hope and belief that the current announcement is not the conclusion of federal action in support of the courageous population of immigrants continually building and rebuilding our nation. Congress must act to reform our immigration system -- to embed shared and celebrated principles of anti-discrimination, family values, entrepreneurial initiative, and community commitment. However, should our nation continue to be saddled with a do-nothing Congress – or worse, afflicted by a Know-Nothing Congress – we can and should expect further administrative action to protect millions of equally valued immigrants from the daily risk of uprooting and detention." -- **Thomas A. Saenz, MALDEF President and General Counsel.**

"In light of Congressional gridlock and inaction, we welcome the President's needed, legal and sensible decision to use an executive order to address our broken and dysfunctional immigration system. With this announcement by the President, change is finally coming to America. While executive action is no substitute for long overdue legislation, this historic victory changes the status quo for

millions of Latino families, providing them the opportunity to stay unified, work and live in a country they call home. As we've said before, if Congress won't act to protect our families and communities, then the President must. We continue to call on Congress to act immediately, robustly and comprehensively to provide a permanent legislative solution for our nation's 11 million undocumented immigrants. We will not rest until we have a just, humane, and inclusive immigration policy reform in the United States." -- **José Calderón, President of Hispanic Federation.**

"Farmworker Justice commends President Obama for providing temporary protection for undocumented immigrants who have strong ties to our communities. Several hundred thousand farmworkers who labor on our farms and ranches could be eligible for this administrative relief. Even as we celebrate with those who will be eligible for relief, we are disappointed at the limits of the program. Congress should pass comprehensive immigration reform with an opportunity for immigration status and citizenship." -- **Bruce Goldstein, President, Farmworker Justice**

"On behalf of NHCOA, we are heartened and encouraged by President Obama's three-point executive action plan that supports our economy, our national security, and millions of hardworking immigrant families and workers, which include Latino seniors. While these actions are positive steps, it is only a temporary solution as an estimated 6 million people will not be covered under President Obama's short-term fix. Therefore, we urge the House of Representatives to act on, and pass, the U.S. Senate bipartisan bill swiftly and decisively." -- **Dr. Yanira Cruz, NHCOA President and CEO**

"President Obama demonstrated leadership and made an important step to improve and change the lives of millions of immigrant families and workers. Yet he did not go far enough. We will not stop working until there is a permanent solution for everyone to live without fear of deportation. And we will defend this action against attacks by anti-immigrants who want to derail and hold back immigrant families from achieving the American Dream. It has been a long time since the Reagan initiatives to normalize the status of our country's undocumented population in 1986. America has shown that it continues to need immigrant labor and immigrant small business initiatives to help our economy. So it was high time for another president to provide a step towards normalization of status for so many contributing and productive members of our Latino communities." -- **Juan Cartagena, President and General Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF**

"Administrative relief aimed at overhauling our immigration system is a positive first step in putting our nation on a path that will benefit all Americans. While only a short-term solution, executive action would serve the economic and civic interests of our nation by bringing more than five million tax-paying immigrants who are already making significant contributions to their communities out of the shadows and into the light. Continuing our tradition of providing timely and relevant information to the Latino community, NALEO Educational Fund will launch a new administrative relief hotline -- (844) 411-iAMERICA (844-411-4263) -- in partnership with the iAmerica campaign." -- **Arturo Vargas, Executive Director, NALEO Educational Fund**

"Today, President Obama took decisive action in granting immigration relief to 5 million undocumented people. LULAC expects Congress to follow President Obama's lead because the country still needs comprehensive immigration reform to address other key immigration challenges. According to some estimates, every year that Congress fails to pass immigration reform measures such as H.R. 15, the country loses out on \$15.8 billion in potential economic gains per year – which translates to \$1.3 billion a month, and \$43 million a day. If, however, the Republican led Congress chooses simply to continue its anti-immigrant discourse, it will only succeed in alienating the majority of Americans who favor such reforms." -- **Brent Wilkes, LULAC National Executive Director**

"There is broad support for the president to take actions to help working and often vulnerable families and communities, including on immigration. All those involved in this issue should heed this call for unity and support the president's leadership to remedy a broken immigration system on behalf of our country. And the House Republican leadership should use this moment to at long last move forward on comprehensive immigration reform legislation." -- **Janet Murguía, President and CEO, NCLR**

“President Obama’s executive action will contribute significantly to the well-being of families and communities and will enhance efforts to prevent domestic and sexual violence as well as workplace exploitation of vulnerable populations. Nevertheless, it is important for Congress to fulfill its responsibility to pass comprehensive legislation to fix the broken immigration system.” -- **Juan Carlos Areán, Acting CEO of Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network**

“We join communities across the country in supporting the President’s use of broad legal authority to address record-level deportations, and we commend today’s announcement. For far too long, our families have been senselessly torn apart by injustices in our current immigration laws and policies. With this announcement, the President has taken a bold and necessary step to recognize the humanity of immigrant women and families—and he can and should do more. It’s time for this Administration to lift the bans on health coverage for immigrant women and families, including those granted administrative relief, and to put an end to harmful detention policies. We also know that the responsibility to create lasting, comprehensive solutions falls on Congress. We look to the House and Senate to stop playing games with the lives of immigrant women and support the health of our families, communities, and economy.” -- **Jessica González-Rojas, Executive Director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health**

“The time is well overdue for legislative action that addresses the inefficiencies of our immigration system, strengthens our economy, and maximizes the contributions and talent that come with our American immigrant tradition. The HNBA applauds President Obama for doing what he can, within his Executive powers, to alleviate the lack of action on the part of Congress, and to find solutions to keep families together. We continue to urge the Congress to take decisive, legislative action to resolve the uncertainty, to alleviate the fear, and to bring out of the shadows the millions of hardworking, undocumented immigrants that live, work, and contribute to the prosperity of this great nation.” -- **HNBA National President, Cynthia D. Mares.**

“This action by the President is way too long overdue and it should be recognized that it does not constitute real immigration reform but is merely a temporary band aid to address the years of exploitation and abuses experienced by immigrant workers and their families. We are also concerned that the President will not fully exercise his power of executive action to impact on all those who should be eligible for legalization, and expect that they will be shortchanged in terms of what should be basic human rights benefits such as health insurance. President Obama’s record also demonstrates that his public pronouncements do not necessarily result in effective federal action, with agencies such as Homeland Security consistently undermining the President’s rhetoric. We are also convinced that the Republican Congress will not be seriously considering humane comprehensive immigration reform. As a result, we fully support President Obama’s use of executive action for deportation relief as a limited but humane stop-gap measure.” --**Angelo Falcón, President, National Institute for Latino Policy**

“Millions of immigrants and families will soon be able to breathe a sigh of relief thanks to the bold executive action of President Obama. As advocates, we are grateful that the issue has been brought to the top of the national agenda. This catalyst gives hope to our community, but we still need significant action from Congress and urge them to act without delay or partisan motives.” -- **Amy Hinojosa, President and CEO, MANA, A National Latina Organization**

“While we commend the President’s action to protect up to 5 million immigrants, we must keep in mind that this is only a temporary solution and there is still much to be done. A remaining 7 million immigrants will still be without protection. We urge the administration to act expeditiously in implementing this plan, and more importantly, we insist that Congress address this long-averted issue through the enactment of comprehensive immigration reform legislation.” -- **Ignacio Salazar, President and CEO of SER-Jobs for Progress National, Inc.**

“We believe in an America where nobody lives in the shadows. Congress must create a new immigration process that supports the rule of law, grows our economy, and prioritizes the safety of our nation, while respecting individuals and families. Although administrative action will create protective status and broaden visa programs, this measure is neither comprehensive nor permanent. Congress must act. We applaud President Obama’s leadership in recognizing that reform is what the business community has called for, and the American people deserve. The USHCC will continue to work with individuals, on both sides of the aisle, who understand

that immigration reform is an economic imperative." -- **Javier Palomarez**, President & CEO, United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

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