**Immigration Reform: Hard Questions and Suggested Answers**

1. My boss is already on HR.15. What more do you want?

* Co-sponsor the Protect Family Values at the Border Act and the HELP Separated Children Act
* Sponsor amendments on DHS accountability, accessible pathway to citizenship, etc.

1. Why is it so dangerous to deport people at night? They traveled across the border at night, didn’t they?

* There is a difference between desperate people taking risks and a democratic government that works to address humanitarian crises around the world actually creating one unnecessarily at our own border.
* We are concerned about people being deported to cities that they aren’t familiar with, with high homicide rates, and few or no social services for recently deported migrants.
* Additionally, the US government often fails to tell the Mexican government about deportations ahead of time so that they can be prepared to receive people, particularly children, pregnant women, elderly people, people in need of medical assistance, etc.

1. I have a lot of agriculture in my district. I know some farmers are worried that if folks have citizenship, they won’t be willing to continue working in agriculture.

* As people of faith, we strive to recognize the dignity of each human being and not use people as a means to an end. The idea that we should deliberately lock people into an underclass, is counter to both our faith and American values.

1. Why isn’t legal permanent residency good enough? It allows them to stay, work legally, and not fear deportation, doesn’t it?

* Never having the opportunity, even years down the road, to become full members of our civic community is a way of wrongly trying to say “you will never really belong” to a group of people who have in fact been members of and contributing to our communities for years, and in some cases decades.

1. Immigrant workers are taking American jobs—why should we be worried about protecting their rights?

* In fact, that perception does not bear out. The jobs that many immigrants now hold are ones that US workers are not willing to do.
* Research has shown that fully integrating immigrants into our society will grow our economy, create more jobs and spur innovation in the American workforce. (CATO Institute, Center for American Progress, Congressional Budget Office). In fact, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that 28% of all new businesses created last year were started by immigrants.
* Right now, we have a shadow economy in which people are paid less than minimum wage, often don’t have adequate protection or any benefits. The ability of unscrupulous employers to exploit undocumented workers is a threat to the job security, working conditions, and compensation of US-born workers.

1. In the end, isn’t this going to mean having a lot more people on welfare?

* Immigrants are homeowners and entrepreneurs at significantly higher levels than native born Americans.
* The current poverty levels within the undocumented community are driven by the fact that they are forced to work under the table, without benefits, many protections or adequate wages. Providing a pathway through which they would work legally would fundamentally alter these conditions and would significantly reduce the poverty rate.

1. These are people who chose to leave their families behind when they migrated, so I don’t believe that their number one priority is family unity.

* When forced to choose between survival and family unity, yes, many immigrants made the horrifically difficult decision to leave their families. This doesn’t mean that family unity isn’t incredibly important to them and that it doesn’t become their number one priority as soon as they have achieved a minimum level of security.

1. I’m sympathetic to everything that you’re saying, but I think the accountability stuff is just unnecessary bureaucracy. Border Patrol agents put their lives on the line to stop weapons and drugs from entering our country every day.
   * DHS is a young agency which has grown exponentially since its creation a decade ago. Border Patrol, in particular, has doubled in the last 8 years. Immigration enforcement currently costs $18 billion a year, 15 times what it costs in 1986 (after adjusting for inflation). Unfortunately, accountability mechanisms within the agency have not been able to keep pace with this rapid growth.
   * This is not unnecessary bureaucracy; it is about the good governance, transparency and accountability that helps a democracy function.
   * Furthermore, it is clear that we have problem. Border Patrol has killed at least 19 people at the southern border, including 2 minors, since 2010. In the last five years, there have been 1,187 complaints about inappropriate use of force.
2. I understand that these folks are in a difficult place, but at the end of the day, they broke the law. And there have to be consequences for breaking the law.

* This is a disingenuous argument. We all understand the difference between traffic violations and violent crimes.
* It’s also erroneous to call this an “amnesty.” All of the legalization proposals on the table would require immigrants to pay a substantial fine. When a police officer requires you to pay a traffic ticket for speeding you don’t thank the court for giving you “amnesty.”
* There are a wide range of reasons why people take the risk of migrating irregularly—to reunite with family, earn enough money to send their kids to school, or to get out of a life-threatening situation. As a faith community, we understand how hard these choices are to make, and we are called to respond to them with mercy and compassion. We expect the same from our lawmakers.
* None of us here are in a position to judge people who are compelled to break minor laws in order to survive.
* While undocumented immigrants are indeed outside the law and thus “break” the law, the unjust, outdated, and inadequate law also breaks them. Our nation cannot have it both ways.

1. You’ve seen the mess that the Obama Administration made in rolling out Obamacare. How could we possibly trust this Administration to implement immigration reform?

* This is too important to play political games with and the status quo is, as Archbishop Gomez recently stated, “a stain on the soul of our nation.”
* Unlike the Affordable Care Act, there is bipartisan support within the legislature, among governors, and through a broad swath of civil society and the business community for immigration reform. All of these actors will help to implement immigration reform, and we know that the implementation period will cover at least two Administrations beyond President Obama’s.

1. I hear what you’re saying about family unity, but you have to understand that this is ultimately about chain migration. We’ll never have enough family visas because as more people are allowed to come, they have more family back home who they want to bring. These are very violent countries; of course they all want to live in the U.S.

* This is why we don’t see immigration reform, especially in its current form, as a silver bullet. This is ultimately about many intersecting US policies, and the need to make them work together to achieve our stated policy objective of deterring irregular migration. This is particularly important for trade policy, foreign military assistance, and rules governing US corporations overseas.
* In recent years, economic growth and other factors in Mexico significantly decreased migration from Mexico to the U.S. Despite a large Mexican-American community in the U.S., we are seeing a decreasing, not increasing, number of people trying to come to the U.S. from Mexico.