

# THE DIGNITY ACT

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**TOPLINE SUMMARY:** The Dignity Act provides a reasonable, compassionate, and complete solution to America's immigration crisis. It ends illegal immigration to the United States once and for all, reestablishes law and order, provides a practical solution for the undocumented, revitalizes the American workforce, and restores America's economy.

## **Key Points:**

- Secures the Border.
- Enhances Enforcement and Mandates E-Verify.
- Reforms the Asylum System.
- Protects Dreamers.
- Dignity Program: Undocumented immigrants can enter a 10-year program for conditional legal status.
- Redemption Pathway: Provides an optional path to more permanent legal status, but with enhanced criteria, for those that have completed the Dignity Program.
- Provides Workforce Retaining for unemployed or displaced American workers.
- Implements market-based reforms for Agricultural and Guest Workers.

**Background on the Dignity Program:** The last time the United States saw serious immigration reform was through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, passed and signed into law under President Ronald Reagan. IRCA made it unlawful to knowingly hire illegal immigrants, while legalizing most undocumented immigrants who had arrived prior to 1982. Two important take-aways from this effort inform the Dignity Proposal:

1. Despite a relatively straightforward pathway to citizenship provided to almost 3 million undocumented immigrants under the IRCA, only 1 million (1/3 of those eligible) accepted the offer to become U.S. citizens. The other 2 million were content to have a legal status that allowed them to stay and work in the U.S. and have protection from deportation. They did not feel the need to adjust to a higher status or pursue citizenship.
2. It failed to secure the border and put proper enforcement measures in place to stop the future flow of illegal immigration into the United States. Without proper safeguards, the undocumented population grew way out of control over the last few decades and led to the major problem we face today.

**The Takeaways:** The Dignity Proposal considers that the majority of the undocumented population may not be looking for a citizenship-or-nothing deal, but would likely be content with the opportunity to live in the U.S. legally, work and pay taxes, have protection from deportation (for non-felons), and be able to travel to their country of origin and be with family for the holidays. It also recognizes that real border security and effective enforcement measures must be in place to ensure any fix would be a final one and would never be needed again.

**A Shining City on a Hill:** The United States has historically been a beacon of refuge for those fleeing violence and oppression or seeking a new life and opportunities. In recent decades, our broken immigration system has been exploited, leading to a situation that is unbecoming of our great nation. While the United States is a nation of laws, we are also a nation of second chances. Though Dignity and a chance at Redemption, this legacy can continue.

## **A DEEPER DIVE:**

**Border Security and Enforcement:** Authorizes funding for a full border infrastructure system to gain and maintain operational control of the southern border. An impenetrable border infrastructure system includes enhanced physical barriers, employing the most up-to-date technology, increased personnel, and securing our ports of entry. A trigger mechanism ensures that the border is fully secure before subsequent reforms in this proposal are vested. It also

implements mandatory E-Verify, ensures criminal aliens are removed immediately, increases penalties for illegal border crossings, and combats visa overstays.

**Asylum Reform:** Reforms the asylum system to prevent abuse and halt the flow of economic migrants, while improving processing for those genuinely fleeing persecution and violence. Establishes 4 Regional Processing Centers (RPC's) at the U.S. southern border to determine if the individual qualifies for asylum or is ineligible to stay in the United States. Family units claiming asylum will be immediately taken to an RPC and will stay there until their case is decided, ending the current catch and release policy. Establishes the "Last in, First Out" policy of immediately processing those arriving today and going backwards. Cases will be expedited and adjudicated and should be decided within 45 days, but no later than 180 days. Takes measures to curb irregular migration from Central America.

**Welcome Home the Dreamers:** The United States has never punished children for the actions of their parents. Dreamers were brought here as children through no fault of their own. While this may be the only home they have ever truly known, a dream can become a nightmare if it can never be realized. It provides immediate legal status and an earned pathway to permanent legalization through work experience, military service, or higher education. They deserve a true welcome home.

### **Practical Solution for the Undocumented:**

**Dignity Program (10 Years):** Through the 10-year Dignity Program, undocumented immigrants will be provided a chance to work, earn legal status, pay restitution, and get right with the law. They must comply with all federal and state laws, pass a criminal background check, be employed, and pay taxes. They must contribute to the American Worker Fund to begin the program. The Dignity program provides work authorization and protection from removal proceedings, but only as long as conditions are being met. Dignity participants will pay \$10,000 in restitution during the 10 years of the program, must check in with DHS every 2 years, and must remain in good public standing.

Successful completion of the Dignity Program would provide an indefinitely renewable 5-year visa to maintain a work permit and legal status. Those taking the 5-year renewable visa would be unable to adjust to any higher status. Individuals in the Dignity Program will not have access to federal means-tested benefits or entitlements. They will be net contributors to tax revenue and the U.S. economy.

**The Redemption Program (+5 years):** The Redemption Program is optional, and individuals must complete the 10-year Dignity Program to start the Redemption Program. It will offer a chance at redemption and to earn more permanent legal status. The 5-year Redemption Program requires that participants learn English and U.S. civics, and provides the opportunity for those seeking permanent legal status to contribute to their local community either through local volunteer work, national community service, or increased contributions into the American Worker Fund. Enforcement through a functioning mandatory E-Verify System and certification of a fully secure Border will be completed before the Redemption Program can begin. It also opens up eligibility for existing pathways to citizenship, but would not be a special pathway. Individuals applying would go to the back of the line.

**American Workers:** Funds paid into the Dignity Program will be used to help train and upskill American workers. For every 1 participant in the Dignity Program, the \$10,000 restitution they pay will be able to train, retain, or provide higher education to at least 2 American workers.

**American Agricultural Dominance:** Implements market-based reforms for Agricultural and Guest Workers and modernizes the H-2A agricultural guestworker program to create an effective agricultural workforce program for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It also creates a Certified Agricultural Worker program. Through these policies, the Dignity Act will help America's farmers and ranchers grow and innovate, and ultimately dominate for decades to come. This is critical for our ability to keep feeding American families and exporting products around the world.