



2008 Democratic Presidential Primary Endorsement Guide



Immigration

QUESTION

"What would you add to the recent immigration proposal in Congress? What elements do you support, and what elements do you oppose? How would you achieve political consensus for your policy?"

BACKGROUND

S1639

Sen. Kennedy sponsored S1639, a bill to provide for comprehensive immigration reform. The bill did not come to a final vote when a motion to invoke cloture failed to receive the necessary 60 votes.

The major provisions of the bill included provisions for increased border security and enforcement, procedures for enforcement of immigration laws, and a temporary worker program. It also would have established a merit based immigration evaluation system and a process for illegal aliens to apply for citizenship. The bill declared English the national language of the US government and addressed the care and custody of unaccompanied alien children with no lawful immigration status. (1) A section by section summary of the proposed temporary worker program and commentary can be found on 14 Points, a Graduate Student blog of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School.(2) The full text of the bill can be found on the Library of Congress web site. (3)

Candidate Voting Records and Interest Group Ratings

The cloture motion on S1639 failed 46-53. Senators Biden, Clinton, Dodd, and Obama voted in favor of ending debate on S 1639. (3)

In our research, we found that the American Immigration Lawyers Association, an advocate of comprehensive immigration reform, gave Sen. Biden and Rep. Kucinich a 100% score for supporting its interests in 2006; Senators Clinton, Dodd, Obama received a 88% rating. Americans for Better Immigration, which lobbies for reduction in immigration numbers, give the Democratic candidates D or D- on its report card; Richardson received an F-.

Platform and Public Statements

The platform and public statements by most of the candidates express support for both border security and a process for undocumented immigrants to achieve legal status and citizenship. Biden's explanation of his vote for the border fence does not withstand analysis (what is to stop 20 kilos of cocaine from going over, under or around the fence?) Richardson, by contrast, made a very strong statement in a CNN interview.

BIDEN

Record	Platform/Statements
Senator Biden supported the interests of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) 100 percent in 2006. Americans for Better Immigration (ABI) Report Card: D Cloture Motion on S1639 6/28/07 Yes	"There doesn't need to be a 700-mile fence, 14 million illegals -- now you tell me how many buses, car loads, planes that are going to go out, round up all these people, spend hundreds of millions of billions of dollars for the whole world watching, while we send these folks back. Rather than get a background check on all of them, take out the criminals, get them back, and provide for a means by which we allow earned citizenship over the next decade or so." "I voted for the [Mexican border] fence was that was the only alternative that was there, and I voted for the fence related to drugs. You can -- a fence will stop 20 kilos of cocaine coming through that fence. It will not stop someone climbing over it or around it. Demo Debate 6/3/07

CLINTON

Record	Platform/Statements
American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): 88 percent in 2006. Americans for Better Immigration (ABI) Report Card: D- Cloture Motion on S1639 6/28/07 Yes	I'm in favor of comprehensive immigration reform, which includes tightening our border security, sanctioning employers to employ undocumented immigrants, getting the 12 million or so immigrants out of the shadows. That's very important to me. After 9/11, we've got to know who's in this country. And then giving them a chance to pay a fine, pay back taxes, learn English & stand in line to be eligible for a legal status in this country. Democratic Debate, 6/3/07

DODD

Record	Platform/Statements
American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): 88 percent in 2006. Americans for Better Immigration (ABI) Report Card: D- Cloture Motion on S1639 6/28/07 Yes	I am deeply disappointed that the Senate voted against the motion to invoke cloture on S. 1639. With over 12 million undocumented workers in America, a dysfunctional immigration system, and broken borders, our country is facing an immigration crisis that undermines the rule of law, divides families and threatens our national security. The American people expected this Congress to find a workable and comprehensive solution to resolve this crisis. This bill was far from perfect, especially in terms of the guest worker program and family unification. But it offered us an opportunity to move beyond the status quo and fix some of these problems including by investing billions of dollars in border security and practically dealing with the undocumented population. Press Release 6/28/07

EDWARDS

Record	Platform/Statements
American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): No 2006 rating Americans for Better Immigration (ABI) Report Card: D	Q: Should it become easier for undocumented foreign workers in the US to gain legal immigration status? A: We should reform the immigration system so there is a clear road map to legalization and citizenship for undocumented immigrants who work hard and follow the law. At the same time, we should work with our ally, Mexico, to better control the border and stop illegal trafficking. AP Jan 2004

GRAVEL

Record	Platform/Statements
Congressional voting record not found. His response to DC4D's questionnaire expressed support for providing a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and opposition to a physical wall or barrier along our southern border.	We speak English. That doesn't mean we can't encourage other languages. I speak French and English. People speak Spanish and English. But the official language of the United States of America is English. Democratic Debate 6/3/07 Another major issue was Immigration. "If we were to deport every illegal immigrant in this country," Gravel spoke, "it would be the worst thing in this country since the trail of tears...it would be 'Trail of Tears II.'" The Senator said we need to help Mexico..."they're coming here, because they know they can find jobs." Blue State Observer June 2006

KUCINICH

Record	Platform/Statements
American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): 100 percent in 2006. Americans for Better Immigration (ABI) Report Card: D-	It is a blot on American history that we have maintained a system of slave labor, and now we're blaming the immigrants for that. We can have sane immigration policies. But we have to stop blaming the victim. We have to also make sure that we do not exclude people from an opportunity. Those who have been here, who have paid their taxes and paid their dues for the last decade need to have a chance to have a path to citizenship. They should not be told, after they've made their contribution to our economy, "No, we don't want you anymore; go home," because America is their new home. Take Back America Conference 6/20/07

OBAMA

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): 88 percent in 2006.</p> <p>Americans for Better Immigration (ABI) Report Card: D-</p> <p>Cloture Motion on S1639 6/28/07 Yes</p>	<p>We want to have a situation in which those who are already here, are playing by the rules, are willing to pay a fine and go through a rigorous process should have a pathway to legalization. Most Americans will support that if they have some sense that the border is also being secured. What they don't want is a situation in which there is a pathway to legalization and you've got another several hundred thousand of folks coming in every year. That is a central position we should be able to arrive at. Demo Debate 6/3/07</p> <p>http://usliberals.about.com/od/extraordinaryspeeches/a/Obamalmmi.htm</p>

RICHARDSON

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA): No rating</p> <p>Americans for Better Immigration (ABI) Report Card: F-</p> <p>No voting record available</p>	<p>Q: Are you happy that the compromise, bipartisan legislation, which Pres. Bush, Sen. Kennedy & Sen. McCain all endorsed, has effectively collapsed?</p> <p>A: No, I'm not happy, because I wanted them to push comprehensive legislation and fix the main problems. And the main problems were a fence between Mexico and the US, which I think is not sustainable. Secondly, they had an amendment that broke up families; third, a lack of labor protections when it came to the guest worker program. It makes sense to have comprehensive legislation, but they have to fix that main provision, the flaw in the bill that breaks up families. That's not been the standards in our immigration laws in the past.</p> <p>Q: And if they revise that, would you support this compromise?</p> <p>A: Yes, I would. If they take care of the not dividing up families, if they get rid of some of those provisions relating to the wall, look at this wall, dividing two countries up. CNN 6/10/07</p>

FURTHER READING

Immigration Reform: American Immigration Lawyers Association Resource Guide <http://www.aila.org/resourceguide>

Voting Record and Interest Group Ratings:

Project Vote Smart <http://www.vote-smart.org/>

American Immigration Lawyers Association <http://www.aila.org>

Americans for Better Immigration <http://www.betterimmigration.com/>

Platform/Public Statements

On the Issues.org <http://www.ontheissues.org>

General

About.com 2008 Presidential Race Hub <http://usliberals.about.com/od/2008presidentialracehub/>

Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

<http://immigrationdebate.blogspot.com/>

NOTES

- (1) Congressional Research Summary of S1639, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:SN01639:@@D&summ2=m&>
- (2) <https://blogs.princeton.edu/mt/mt-tb.cgi/2342> Jonathan T Rothwell, Executive Editor, PhD Candidate in Public Affairs, Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School
- (3) **Text of S1639** <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c110:s1639>