



Immigration Reform on the Horizon The U.S. Senate Approves Comprehensive Bill

Americans for Immigrant Justice (AI Justice) applauds the "Gang of Eight" Senators who achieved what for years has seemed impossible: a comprehensive immigration reform bill. We are encouraged by many provisions in the S.744 bill. In particular, we salute:

- A path to citizenship for an estimated 11 million immigrants;
- An accelerated path to citizenship for Dreamers;
- Provisions allowing families to reunite; and,
- Expediting family petitions that are now backlogged.

Yet we are also troubled by counter-productive provisions, including those that would:

- Militarize the border at an added cost of \$30 billion when border crossings are at net-zero and deportations are record-high;
- Needlessly delay immigrants from applying for legal permanent residency until border security requirements are met; and,
- Do little to curb abuses routinely committed by Border Patrol agents.

"While the Senate's final bill is far from ideal, it provides a **workable path to citizenship for 11 million aspiring Americans**. The Senate is sending an important message: Our nation desperately needs comprehensive immigration reform," said **Cheryl Little, AI Justice Executive Director**.

"Time after time, this nation has assimilated waves of immigrants who went on to make our country stronger and wealthier. Now it is up to the U.S. House to deliver bipartisan reform worthy of this nation of immigrants. I'm holding out hope because **Democrats have a debt to pay and Republicans have a party to save.**"

AI Justice well knows abuses along the U.S. Southern border. After interviewing more than 50 immigrants apprehended in the Rio Grande Valley, we concluded they systematically were being subjected to **unlawful conditions in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) holding cells** dubbed "hieleras." Locked up in these freezing holding cells, immigrants had no beds, chairs or blankets and were forced to sleep on the concrete floor. They only had a single sink and toilet in plain view.

Constantly hungry, immigrants suffered headaches. In one case, CBP confiscated a client's insulin. Afterward she was held in the hielera 13 days before passing out and being taken to a hospital for emergency medical attention. These are among the abuses that immigration reform should remedy.

We also **thank our Senator Rubio**, a member of the Gang of Eight, for the path to citizenship included in the bill and his beautiful description of this nation of immigrants. Despite some glaring flaws in S.744, we remain hopeful that Congress will ultimately provide long-sought immigration relief for millions of deserving families.

AI Justice is a non-profit law and advocacy firm that protects and promotes the basic human rights of immigrants through a unique combination of free direct legal services, impact litigation, policy reform, and public education at local, state, and national levels. We champion the rights of unaccompanied immigrant children; advocate for victims of trafficking and domestic violence; serve as a watchdog on immigration detention practices and policies; and speak for immigrant groups who have particular and compelling claims to justice.