

Immigration: The Candidate's Views

Immigration has always been a controversial issue in the United States, particularly in the Midwest. The growing immigrant population is making the subject a deciding factor for the upcoming elections, specifically the 2012 presidential election.

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act- DREAM Act, for short- is a piece of legislation that allows children who were unknowingly and illegally brought into the country begin the citizenship process. In order for these children to obtain citizenship, they first have to apply and be accepted into the program. Once they are in the program, they will be given temporary residency for six years. During these six years, they must complete at least two years in the military or finish a two-year college degree and keep a clean slate. If they fulfill the criteria, they will receive permanent residency, which is just one step from US citizenship. This bill, however, has not been made into a law and therefore each candidate has a unique view on the Act and immigration itself (“Dream” 1).

Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney has an optimistic outlook on the future of immigration for America. Romney believes that the U.S. immigration system is broken because it excludes many workers that could help boost the economy by adding business and financial resources. A new system is needed and Romney has created a plan to address the issue. He would like to attract highly skilled immigrants to positively contribute to the American society and make the temporary work visa system more functional. Romney would also like to discourage illegal immigration on the southern border and fix the issue of immigrants going into hiding after their visas expire. He does, however, acknowledge the illegal immigrants who were already in the United States and, to combat the large number of illegal immigrants, would like to offer them the opportunity to serve in the military in exchange for their U.S. citizenship if their tour of duty is completed. Romney also acknowledges the long wait many legal immigrants endure to be reunited with their family and would like to do so more efficiently through programs. Through these steps, Romney believes there will be a positive upgrade in the immigration system. (“Immigration” 1)

Barack Obama, on the other hand, wants to work towards a comprehensive immigration reform. Catherine Poe, in a *Washington Times* article, writes about Dream Deferred Action, which will suspend 1.7 million young people from being deported back to their home countries (1). Aside from the Dream Deferred Action, Obama proposes a new rule to help keep families together by allowing spouses of illegal immigrants and their children to apply for legal status. Obama also opposes many state laws where they are trying to state-by-state fix the broken immigration system. However, Obama is in favor of the Dream Act, for he played a large role in creating it. To clarify, Obama is not okay with all illegal immigrants, rather it is the ones who have lived here since childhood that if deported would have nowhere to go, the ones who did not have a choice in illegally immigrating to the US (Sargent 1).

After careful consideration of each candidate's views on immigration, it would be most beneficial to the Midwest if they sway towards Obama's stance on immigration and the DREAM Act. While candidate Romney has a seemingly legitimate plan, Obama's has successfully been able to keep nearly two million immigrants in the United States; these immigrants deserve an opportunity to become United States citizens. By allowing an accommodative approach, Obama's plan would be more positive and more welcoming to the illegal immigrant. Unlike states with unjust harassment towards immigrants, the Midwest appears to be a more welcoming region.

Richard Longworth, author of *Caught in the Middle*, states that, "What happens in America happens first in the Midwest" (5). Immigration is an issue that hits all of the states within the Midwest; it is a big part of how the region came to be a region of its own. Immigration is what gave us the reputation that we have always had. New immigrants come in and modify the ideas of the Midwest but never completely change them. Even with what Longworth calls the great black movement, the Midwest was able to maintain its reputation as "a balanced society, hardworking, religious, [and] stolid" region (19). Currently, immigration is part of the process of building the region back up. Immigration has the power to unite and divide people. With immigration there are more people to fill jobs that are unwanted, but there are also not as many

jobs to fill for American citizens. Immigration is an important part of the Midwest, but the question of candidates' views on immigration will come into play in the upcoming November election.

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