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April 12, 2013

Dear Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation:

I write to urge your support for passage of comprehensive immigration reform in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. President Obama has called on Congress to act, and earlier this year I was pleased to see a bipartisan framework introduced in the U.S. Senate as a first step toward bringing our country's immigration system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is a great opportunity for our state and the nation.

Washington is unique in its economic, cultural and ethnic diversity. Yet our broken federal immigration system does not account for our needs or those of other states. The current system is hurting both businesses that are looking to attract workers and families who are striving to build a better life. In 2011, our state's vital agricultural industries — worth \$8 billion annually — were forced to leave 10 percent of their crops unpicked, due in large part to an insufficient workforce. Meanwhile, our high-tech companies, including Microsoft, continue to lack the highly skilled workers they need to fill jobs they are generating. Faulty visa programs leave many families divided, and lack of legal status forestalls opportunities for thousands of our students and residents.

Clearly, our state is uniquely positioned to benefit from an overhaul of the U.S. immigration system. From the information technology sector to agricultural production, immigration reform will deliver important benefits for our state's economy, keep families together, lift communities out of poverty and improve the lives of all our people.

Certain principles have been proposed by a bipartisan group of U.S. senators as the foundation for comprehensive immigration reform: a fair pathway to citizenship, robust border security, a better legal immigration system, an effective system of verifying employment eligibility, and reforms to immigrant workforce pipelines that supply the labor force our economy needs. Comprehensive reform legislation constructed upon these pillars is essential for the future of Washington as it is for all states.

By creating a fair pathway to citizenship, we have the chance to strengthen our communities, provide economic opportunity and dignity to our undocumented residents, shrink poverty rates and ensure that all pay their fair share of taxes. This pathway must also extend to young immigrants, most of whom have been educated in our schools and who have known no other home outside the United States.

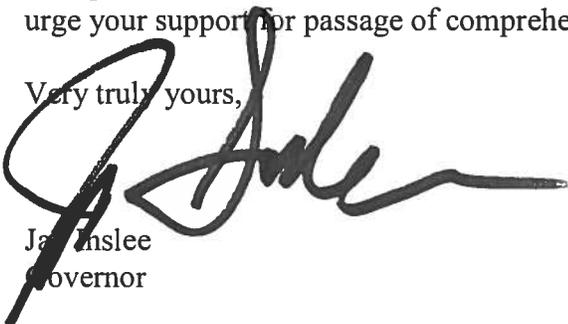


Comprehensive legislation should also build upon the Obama Administration's unprecedented efforts to promote border security and halt illegal immigration. As we work to encourage legal immigration, we must further restrict its unlawful equivalent. Reform should also explore avenues to improve employment verification and worker protections.

This overhaul of faulty immigration laws will also give us the occasion to restructure our inadequate visa system for workers and families. This restructuring will keep families united, advance economic opportunity, support our vibrant agricultural sector and provide our high-tech industries with a better-skilled workforce. Under one proposal, we can increase employers' access to highly skilled international workers while providing new resources to build upon the work we have begun to improve science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

Immigration reform must be comprehensive to be effective. A piecemeal reform plan is not a solution, and would only contribute to economic uncertainty in our state. Instead, both parties and chambers must work together to pass meaningful, comprehensive immigration reform. Congress must also ensure that implementation of these reforms is not overly burdensome on families or state government. From a practical perspective, it is vital that legislators consider the resources necessary to ensure an effective, expedient and reliable system. This legislation will foster innovation and grow our economy, raise the standard of living for our people and strengthen our families and communities. There is no better time to seize this opportunity. I urge your support for passage of comprehensive immigration reform this year.

Very truly yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jay Inslee". The signature is written over the text "Very truly yours," and extends across the width of the page.

Jay Inslee  
Governor