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Radio Address
Saturday, May 20, 2006
Draft #6

Good morning. Earlier this week, I spoke to you from the Oval Office to lay out my vision for reforming our Nation's immigration system. And on Thursday, I went to Arizona to visit with the men and women of the Border Patrol. I wanted to get an update on their efforts, because a secure America depends on a secure border.

I believe America can be a lawful society and a welcoming society at the same time. We must enforce our laws while honoring our proud immigrant heritage. So I support comprehensive immigration reform that will accomplish five clear objectives.

First, America must secure its borders. Since I became President, we have increased funding for border security by 66 percent ... hired thousands more Border Patrol agents ... and caught and sent home about six million illegal immigrants. Yet we have much more work to do. So this week I asked Congress to provide funding for dramatic improvements in manpower and technology at the border. We will hire thousands more Border Patrol agents. And to help these agents do their jobs, we will deploy advanced technologies such as high-tech fences in urban areas, infrared cameras, and unmanned aerial vehicles. We will also draw on the expertise of state and local law enforcement in our border communities, and give them new resources and training so they can help secure our border.

Putting these new resources in place will take time. To help during this transition, up to 6,000 National Guard members will be deployed to our southern border. They will assist the Border Patrol by operating surveillance and communications systems ... installing fences and vehicle barriers ... building patrol roads ... and analyzing intelligence. The support of Guard personnel will allow Border Patrol agents to use their skill to focus on securing the border.

Second, to secure our border, we must create a temporary worker program that provides foreign workers a legal and orderly way to enter our country, for a limited period of time. This program would reduce pressure on the border, meet the needs of our economy, and allow honest

immigrants to provide for their families while respecting the law. And it will help us make certain we know who is in our country and why they are here.

Third, we need to hold employers to account for the workers they hire, by creating a better system for verifying documents and work eligibility. This system should include a new tamper-proof identification card for every legal foreign worker. This card would help us enforce the law – and leave employers with no excuse for breaking it. And by making it harder for illegal immigrants to find work in our country, we would discourage people from crossing the border illegally in the first place.

Fourth, we must resolve the status of millions of illegal immigrants who are here already. They should not be given an automatic path to citizenship. This is amnesty, and I oppose it. Amnesty would be unfair to those who are here lawfully – and it would invite further waves of illegal immigration. Some people think any proposal short of mass deportation is amnesty. I disagree. There is a rational middle ground between automatic citizenship for every illegal immigrant and a program of mass deportation. Illegal immigrants who have roots in our country and want to stay should have to pay a meaningful penalty ... pay their taxes ... learn English ... and work in a job for a number of years. People who meet these conditions should be able to apply for citizenship – but approval will not be automatic. And they will have to wait in line behind those who played by the rules and followed the law.

Fifth, we must honor the great American tradition of the melting pot, by helping newcomers assimilate into our society. Americans are bound together by our shared ideals, an appreciation of our history, respect for our flag, and the ability to speak and write in English. We will work to ensure that every new citizen fully embraces our common culture. When immigrants assimilate, they will advance in our society ... realize their dreams ... renew our spirit ... and add to the unity of America.

Congress is now considering legislation on immigration reform. That legislation must be comprehensive. All elements of this problem must be addressed together – or none of them will be solved at all. The House started the debate by passing an immigration bill. Now the Senate should act by the end of this month – so we can work out the differences between the two bills, and Congress can pass a bill for me to sign into law.

We should approach this debate with confidence. America has shown before that we can enforce our laws and uphold our values – and we will do it again. Our Nation honors the heritage of all who come here, because we trust in our country’s genius for making us all Americans – one Nation under God.

Thank you for listening.

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