

lobbyists. We support campaign finance reform, by constitutional amendment if necessary. We support legislation to close loopholes and require greater disclosure of campaign spending. President Obama and the national Democratic Party do not accept contributions from federal lobbyists this cycle. We support requiring groups trying to influence elections to reveal their donors so the public will know who's funding the political ads it sees. President Obama and the Democrats are fighting to reduce the influence of money in politics, and holding Congress to higher conflict-of-interest standards.

## **Greater Together**

As Americans, we are bound together by more than nationality or geography. We are bound by a shared set of ideals and values rooted in the notion that we are greater together; that our collective efforts produce something better than the sum of our individual actions; and that together, rather than divided, we can overcome the greatest challenges that come our way.

The path to restoring middle class security is through the basic values that made our country great. We are a nation that says anyone can make it if you try – no matter who you are, where you come from, or what you look like. We know that America is strongest when everybody has a seat at the table and when the same rules apply to everyone, from Main Street to Wall Street.

Republicans like Mitt Romney want to turn back the clock on the progress we've made, telling people whom they can marry, restricting women's access to birth control coverage, and going back to the same economic policies that benefited the wealthy but crashed our economy. Their narrow vision is of an America where everyone is left to fend for themselves and the powerful can write their own rules. Ours is a vision of a big, compassionate America where everyone who works hard has the chance to get ahead – not just those already at the very top. It's a vision that says everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone engages in fair play. It's a vision that says we prosper when we realize that we are all in it together and stand united as a nation without dividing or excluding people.

## **Strengthening the American Community**

**Immigration.** Democrats are strongly committed to enacting comprehensive immigration reform that supports our economic goals and reflects our values as both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. The story of the United States would not be possible without the generations of immigrants who have strengthened our country and contributed to our economy. Our prosperity depends on an immigration system that reflects our values and meets America's needs. But Americans know that today, our immigration system is badly broken – separating families, undermining honest employers and workers, burdening law enforcement, and leaving millions of people working and living in the shadows.

Democrats know there is broad consensus to repair that system and strengthen our economy, and that the country urgently needs comprehensive immigration reform that brings undocumented immigrants out of the shadows and requires them to get right with the law, learn English, and pay taxes in order to get on a path to earn citizenship. We need an immigration reform that creates a system for allocating visas that meets our economic needs, keeps families together, and enforces the law. But instead of promoting the national interest, Republicans have blocked immigration reform in Congress and used the issue as a political wedge.

Despite the obstacles, President Obama has made important progress in implementing immigration policies that reward hard work and demand personal responsibility. Today, the Southwest border is more secure than at any time in the past 20 years. Unlawful crossings are at a 40-year low, and the Border Patrol is better staffed than at any time in its history. We are continuing to work to hold employers accountable for whom they hire. The Department of Homeland Security is prioritizing the deportation of criminals who endanger our communities over the deportation of immigrants who do not pose a threat,

such as children who came here through no fault of their own and are pursuing an education. President Obama's administration has streamlined the process of legal immigration for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, supporting family reunification as a priority, and has enhanced opportunities for English-language learning and immigrant integration. When states sought to interfere with federal immigration law by passing local measures targeting immigrants, this administration challenged them in court.

President Obama and the Democrats fought for the DREAM Act, legislation ensuring that young people who want to contribute fully to our society and serve our country are able to become legal residents and ultimately citizens. Although this bill has a long history of bipartisan support, Republicans decided to play politics with it rather than do the right thing. So the Obama administration provided temporary relief for youth who came to the United States as children, through no fault of their own, grew up as Americans and are poised to make a real contribution to our country.

These are not permanent fixes. Only Congress can provide a permanent, comprehensive solution. But these are steps in the right direction. President Obama and the Democratic Party stand for comprehensive immigration reform that intelligently prioritizes our country's security and economic needs, while Mitt Romney and the Republicans have opposed commonsense reforms and pandered to the far right.

**Families.** It's time we stop just talking about family values and start pursuing policies that truly value families. The President and Democrats have cut taxes for every working American family, and expanded the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit. We believe that all parents and caregivers – regardless of gender – need more flexibility and support in the workplace. We support passing the Healthy Families Act, broadening the Family and Medical Leave Act, and partnering with states to move toward paid leave. We have invested in expanding and reforming Head Start and grants to states to raise standards and improve instruction in their early learning programs, and we support expanding the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. We must protect our most vulnerable children by supporting our foster care system, adoption programs for all caring parents, grandparents, and caregivers, and protecting children from violence and neglect. We recognize that caring for family members and managing a household is real and valuable work.

President Obama's administration has offered men who want to be good fathers extra support. We have bolstered community and faith-based groups focused on fatherhood, partnered with businesses to offer opportunities for fathers to spend time with their kids at the bowling alley or ballpark, and worked to help deployed dads connect with their children. We all have a stake in forging stronger bonds between fathers and their children.

We support parents and their children as they work to lead healthier lives. With prevention and treatment initiatives on obesity and public health, Democrats are leading the way on supporting healthier, more physically active families and healthy children.

**Supporting Troops, Military Families, and Veterans.** President Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to keeping the sacred trust we have with our troops, military families, and veterans. These brave men and women and their families have borne the burden of war and have always made our

*"We congratulate President Barack Obama for giving hope to millions of aspiring citizens when he announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Immigrant youth – who grow up attending our schools, churches, and places of recreation – come to this nation with the same desires and ideals the forefathers had; liberty, justice, and the pursuit of happiness. In order to create immigration policies that reflect our nation's values, lawmakers must work together to protect the rights of all and create a road map that allows immigrants to become full-fledged citizens. With our dreams, work, and talent we can help make America a more just and prosperous country." – Gaby Pacheco, Listening to America hearing participant*