

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: **Barack Obama**

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If you are a State candidate, please indicate your State Registration Number:

The Sanctuary is a multi-issue organization working in the service of human rights, human reasoning and progressive discussion. Therefore it is critical for us to understand your position on the following issues.

Please give specific answers to the questions and answer them as thoroughly as possible. Please type your answers. Use additional sheets as necessary.

1. Could you please articulate what you think are the most pressing issues for the U.S. immigrant community, at home AND abroad, and how you would hope to address those issues as President?

At home, the immigrant community faces a real challenge from the tension our inability to fix our immigration system has engendered. Abroad, not enough is being done to encourage job creation and economic development and to decrease the pressure to immigrate without authorization to the U.S. in search of work.

2. Do you support comprehensive immigration reform?

Yes.

3. What policy conditions would comprehensive immigration reform have to meet in order for you to support it? Please be specific?

I fought in the U.S. Senate for comprehensive immigration reform. And I will make it a top priority in my first year as president. Not just because we need to secure our borders and get control of who comes into our country. And not just because we have to crack down on employers abusing undocumented immigrants. But because we have to finally bring the 12 million undocumented out of the shadows.

We should require them to pay a fine, learn English, abide by the law, and go to the back of the line for citizenship – behind those who came here legally. But we cannot – and should not – deport 12 million people. That would turn American into something we're not; something we don't want to be.

4. Do you support the establishment of an expanded guest worker program?

I would support a new guest worker program to meet worker shortages in some sectors of the economy, but it must have strong worker protections and not exclude people from ever becoming Americans. It must also take into account that some workers will wish to earn a right to stay in the U.S. permanently.

5. Do you support the expansion and construction of a virtual border along the U.S./Mexico border?

I want to preserve the integrity of our borders. Physical fencing alone is not a solution to our immigration crisis nor should it be the Secretary of Homeland Security's first recourse. However I support physical fencing along the border under very specific circumstances, where it makes sense as a matter of security and to act as a deterrent to unsafe undocumented entry. Securing our borders will not solve the immigration problem in isolation, but combined with an earned path to citizenship for the undocumented and new legal alternatives to unauthorized entry, some additional fencing could help get the border under control.

Sensor technology and additional personnel should be used as a first option and additional fencing should only be built where necessary and agreed to in coordination with local governments, Indian tribes, and done in an environmentally sensitive manner. I will work with local officials on the border and in consultation with border communities to make sure that any additional fencing is not economically or environmentally destructive.

6. Do you support the switch from family based immigration standards to the merit based system put forth in the last round of Senate CIR?

I do not support the reduction of family based visas in order to create a new points based system. I would consider supporting such a system outside existing quotas.

7. Do you support the "touchback" requirements of previous comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) legislation that would require undocumented immigrants to return to their countries of origin in order to normalize their status?

I am disinclined to support touchback requirements because they are symbolic and likely to discourage participation in an earned legalization program.

8. Would you support the addition of funding for stricter enforcement of general labor standards such as wage and hour or safety regulations as part of CIR legislation?

Yes.

9. Would you support an increase in the cap of low-skilled employment-based green cards issued each year from its current level of 5000?

Yes.

10. Would you favor raising the 65,000 cap on high-skilled H-1B temporary work visas, in light of the fact that in the last two years, H-1B visas were quickly filled in a matter of days?

As part of comprehensive reform, I will consider multiple proposals for increasing access to the world's best and brightest to work in America.

11. Do you have a position on providing materials concerning health care and public benefits programs in languages other than English?

I believe that we should ensure that government programs are accessible to hardworking immigrant populations. In 2003, I was the chief co-sponsor and voted for the technical bill making the provisions of the Language Assistance Services Act, which provides assistance to limited or non-English residents in health care facilities, mandatory rather than discretionary. At the same time, I also believe that we must invest in education programs to help immigrants learn English so they can participate fully in American society.

12. Do you support lifetime eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for disabled and/or elderly refugees and asylees who are eligible for SSI except for a lack of U.S. citizenship?

I support SSI eligibility for elderly or disabled refugees and asylees. I am a cosponsor of S. 821, which expands SSI eligibility for refugees, asylees, and other humanitarian immigrants.

13. What are your feelings on immigrant detention?

Detention is a necessary part of enforcement, but it must be humane, safe, and respectful.

14. Do you support family detention centers?

We will review family detention centers for their utility upon entering office.

15. Do you support private companies profiting off of immigrant detention?

Contracting services across government will come under review early on in an Obama Administration.

16. Do you support the Detainee Basic Medical Care Act, the bill that would require the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop procedures to ensure adequate medical care for all detainees held by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)?

The bill is currently pending before Congress. I have staff reviewing it and following hearings on the subject, but I strongly support ensuring that detainees held by ICE are safe.

17. Do you support the United American Families Act, the bill that would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow permanent partners of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, including same-sex partners, to obtain permanent residency?

Yes.

18. Do you support the community service requirement of previous DREAM Act legislation that would grant provisional (conditional) legal residency to immigrant graduates who perform 910 hours of volunteer community service?

Yes.

19. Would you support an immediate moratorium on community and work site raids by ICE?

I support a review of enforcement practices for their effectiveness and strongly support comprehensive immigration reform. Immigration raids are not a solution to our broken immigration system. Workplace enforcement of our laws is, however, important. Employers should not get away with willfully hiring people unauthorized to work here. But spending money on these raids to catch a couple of thousand people is not a long term strategy for dealing with the millions of people who are here. At a minimum, when these raids are executed, we have to make sure that social service agencies are notified and that kids who are in school or at home while their parents are in detention are not left without adult supervision.

20. Do you approve of ICE's use of excessive force to conduct immigration raids as seen recently in Postville, Iowa?

Excessive use of force is never acceptable. That specific case is currently under review.

21. Do you support the Families First Immigration Enforcement Act, the bill that would provide for safe and humane policies and procedures pertaining to the arrest, detention, and processing of aliens in immigration enforcement operations?

I will consider the proposal as part of comprehensive immigration reform.

22. Would you support the incorporation of requirements that would tie both future economic aid and trade agreements to substantive benchmarks in sender nations that would alleviate some of the economic and humanitarian conditions that foster continued migration?

I will pursue a trade and foreign aid policy that will promote development and democracy abroad. I believe we need to do more to promote economic development in Mexico and other sender nations to decrease the pressure to immigrate without authorization to the U.S. in search of work. That means increasing U.S. assistance to these countries, but it also means making it easier and cheaper for private capital – particularly family remittances – to flow into Mexico, for example.

23. Would you renegotiate the NAFTA last phase that just went into effect that lifts restrictions on more US agricultural products, particularly poultry, imported into Mexico?

I have committed to reviewing NAFTA and improving on the text in the agreement in cooperation with Mexico and Canada.

24. Do you support canceling or renegotiating NAFTA?

I will work with the leaders of Canada and Mexico to fix NAFTA so that it works for American workers. NAFTA and its potential were oversold to the American people. It has not created the jobs and wealth that were promised. I believe that we can, and must, make trade work for American workers by opening up foreign markets to U.S. goods and maintaining strong labor and environmental standards. As president, I will work to amend NAFTA so that it lives up to those important principles.

25. Do you support providing subsidies for corn-based ethanol?

Yes. Corn-based ethanol has been an important bridge technology in helping make America more energy independent. However, it does have limitations. That's why I am committed to accelerating the transition to advanced biofuels like cellulosic ethanol. I support broadly revisiting the current subsidy and tariff policies for renewable fuels to ensure that incentives are targeted toward new production from ultra-clean and sustainable sources.

26. Do you support the farm bill, more specifically the agricultural subsidies it contains?

I supported the farm bill but also supported measures to reform subsidies so that they help family farmers, not big vertically integrated corporate agribusinesses.

27. Do you support a restructuring of trade-distorting US farm subsidies?

I support fair trade practices for American farmers. We can compete effectively if the world community will open agriculture trade. Exports are critical to our farm community.

28. Do you support a significant shift in subsidies to help farmers adopt conservation and renewable energy practices on farms?

Yes.

29. Do you support Plan Colombia (the Plan that was meant to combat the principal threat to the nation's political and economic elite: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)) even though after closer examination of Plan Colombia, it has been revealed that the Plan states that public companies and banks are to be privatized leading to massive layoffs and further increasing unemployment at a time when cutbacks in government spending has removed any vestiges of providing a social safety net for those affected?

I support Plan Colombia. However, it is important to take a hard look at whether our assistance to Colombia reflects the right mix of combating drug trafficking and supporting legitimate agriculture efforts. The bottom line is that the drug trade has a devastating impact on the United States and Colombia, and we must continue to do more to reduce the drug trade.

30. Do you support Plan Mexico, which has been considered to be a duplicate of Plan Colombia, which has entrenched violence and corruption in Colombia while failing to reduce drug flow? Do you support canceling or renegotiating Plan Mexico?

The U.S. has a significant stake in Mexico succeeding in defeating and dismantling its destabilizing drug gangs. U.S. assistance, properly targeted, could play an important role in such a process. We need to carefully examine the Administration's recent request for Plan Mexico, particularly given the secrecy that has surrounded the formulation of the proposed package.

31. What would you do to address the racist and nativist rhetoric that is becoming mainstreamed and that is tied to a rising crime wave fueled by the same sentiment?

I have spoken out against hateful rhetoric and will continue to do so. I'll keep fighting and work for a civil debate about immigration where we begin to recognize ourselves in one another.

32. What are you going to do to take a more global approach to the issue of migration?

I will engage multilateral institutions and promote economic development in migrant sending nations.

33. What would you do to provide opportunities in the countries that migrants are fleeing from?

We need a combination of trade, aid, and cultural exchange efforts to provide opportunities in these countries.

34. How do you address the overwhelming amount of money the U.S. federal government spends on defense and military expenditures, at home and abroad, and would you see to it that less money is spent on militarization and more money is spent on social programs?

Federal spending for our national defense is important to protect our homeland and national security interests. I understand we are facing a different set of national security challenges in our post-September 11th world, and that our defense budget should reflect this reality. But I also believe that the goal should be to spend responsibly, as unrestrained defense spending could lead to high deficits and undermine our efforts to invest in pressing national domestic priorities, such as health care and education. And cutting domestic spending directly affects programs that benefit Latinos. We need to maintain a sensible budget that allots sufficient funds for both national defense spending and domestic priorities, like education, Head Start, and Food Stamps. These are mutually obtainable objectives.

35. What leadership have you taken on immigration issues, including but not limited to the issues addressed in this questionnaire?

I participated in the immigrant marches, have attended naturalization workshops, introduced legislation to make the naturalization process more affordable and accessible, and worked with a bipartisan group of Senators to support comprehensive reform in the Senate.

36. On what immigration issues will you take leadership?

As president, I am committed to passing comprehensive reform and fixing our immigration system to ensure that both immigration enforcement and immigration services are better executed.