

## Senate Joint Resolution No. 2

### RESOLUTION CHAPTER 23

Senate Joint Resolution No. 2—Relative to immigration.

[Filed with Secretary of State April 14, 2015.]

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 2, Vidak. Immigration.

This measure would urge Congress and the President of the United States to work together to create a comprehensive and workable approach to reform the nation's immigration system according to specified principles.

WHEREAS, This country was built by immigrants seeking a better life; and

WHEREAS, Estimates suggest that there are 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows in the United States, including millions of children brought to this country undocumented who have grown up here, call the United States home, and are suffering from our dysfunctional immigration policy; and

WHEREAS, A logical and streamlined path to citizenship for individuals after they gain legal status would stimulate the economy by allowing these individuals to get college degrees and driver's licenses, buy homes, start new companies, and create legal, tax-paying jobs, affording them a chance at the American Dream; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress last enacted major immigration legislation more than 25 years ago; and

WHEREAS, Since that time, fragmented attempts at immigration reform have failed to create the rational and effective systems needed to maintain international competitiveness. Whether in industries like agriculture, which requires large numbers of workers able to perform physically demanding tasks, or in industries like technology or health care, where the demand for employees with advanced degrees is projected to exceed supply within the next five years, immigration policy must be designed to respond to emerging labor needs in all sectors of the United States economy; and

WHEREAS, Our national interests and security are not served by our outdated, inefficient, and slow-moving immigration system. Patchwork attempts to mend its deficiencies undermine our potential for prosperity and leave us vulnerable and unable to meet the needs of the modern world; and

WHEREAS, Labor mobility is crucial to our economic prosperity and our country's recovery from the economic crisis. Yet our rigid, outdated immigration policies are making it difficult for our companies and our nation to compete. Information released in a study by the University of California, Los Angeles, states that legalizing the status of undocumented immigrants

working and living in the United States would create approximately \$1.5 trillion in additional gross domestic product growth over the next 10 years and increase wages for all workers. Another study by the University of California, Davis, indicates that the last large wave of immigrants, from 1990 to 2007, inclusive, raised the income of a native-born American worker by an average of \$5,000; and

WHEREAS, California has the largest share of immigrants in the country. These immigrants are a vital and productive part of our state's economy and are active in a variety of industries, including technology, biotech, hospitality, agriculture, construction, services, transportation, and textiles. They also represent a large share of our new small business owners and create economic prosperity and needed jobs for everyone; and

WHEREAS, Keeping these families, business owners, and hard workers in the shadows of society serves no one; and

WHEREAS, Our state, for economic, social, health, security, and prosperity reasons, must support policies that allow individuals to become legal and enfranchised participants in our society and economy; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform should include a reasonable and timely path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who are already living and working in the United States. Immigration reform should also include comprehensive background checks, require demonstrated proficiency in English and payment of all current and back taxes, and have the flexibility to respond to emerging business trends; and

WHEREAS, The Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan research group in Washington, D.C., estimates that in 2012, the federal government spent \$18 billion on immigration enforcement, and since 2004, the number of United States Border Patrol agents has doubled; and

WHEREAS, Increased enforcement has given the federal government the ability to prioritize the deportation of lawbreakers and dangerous individuals and to ensure our border's security. Nevertheless, this enforcement should not be done in an inhumane way; and

WHEREAS, Immigration enforcement should continue to focus on criminals, not on hardworking immigrant families, and not at the expense of efficient trade with two of our top three economic partners; and

WHEREAS, The United States loses large numbers of necessary, highly skilled workers due to the lengthy and complicated processes currently in place to get or keep a legal residency option; and

WHEREAS, Reform should include an expedited process for those residing abroad and applying for legal visas. Additionally, reform should offer permanent residency opportunities to international students in American universities who are highly trained and in high demand, and in so doing avoid an intellectual vacuum after their graduation; and

WHEREAS, Reform should recognize the societal and cultural benefits of keeping the family unit intact. The system should take into account special circumstances surrounding candidates for probationary legal status, such as those of minors who were brought to the country as children or workers

whose labor is essential to maintain our country's competitiveness; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly,* That the Legislature urges the President and the Congress of the United States to work together and create a comprehensive and workable approach to solving our nation's historically broken immigration system, using the principles described in this resolution; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and the Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.