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For Immediate Release

President Obama Leads Immigration Reform Debate *Executive Branch to Shepherd Legislative Process*

June 25, 2009

Washington, D.C. - Today the President, Vice President, and key cabinet members met with a bipartisan group of Senate and House leaders representing the spectrum of opinion on immigration. The White House characterized the meeting as the "launch" of a policy conversation and "an honest discussion about the issues...identifying areas of agreement and areas where we still have work to do, with the hope of beginning the debate in earnest later this year."

The President's remarks after the meeting indicate not only his full commitment to moving immigration reform forward in the coming year, but also his desire to shift the debate from inflammatory rhetoric to genuine dialogue. "But what I'm encouraged by is that after all the overheated rhetoric and the occasional demagoguery on all sides around this issue, we've got a responsible set of leaders sitting around the table who want to actively get something done and not put it off until a year, two years, three years, five years from now, but to start working on this thing right now," said President Obama.

As with other major initiatives, the President announced the formation of an immigration working group led by Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. Secretary Napolitano will work with members of Congress to reach solid, practical solutions.

"Today President Obama moved the ball forward on comprehensive immigration reform and changed the nature of the debate - shifting politicians from finger-pointing to problem-solving," said Mary Giovagnoli, Director of the Immigration Policy Center. "The President and key leaders on both sides of the aisle, including Senator John McCain, are ready to roll up their sleeves and work on practical legislation that solves our immigration crisis. There will be challenges, as there are in any legislative process, but the public should be reassured that we are finally moving forward in a genuine, bipartisan fashion, on a reasoned and reasonable debate on comprehensive immigration reform."

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