New Democrat Coalition Principles for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
Immigration Task Force

Over the last decade, it has become increasingly clear that our immigration system is broken. Members of the business community, unions, faith leaders and the American public have called on Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform that not only brings the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants who live in our communities out of the shadows, but that also provides a realistic solution to stop unlawful immigration and create a fair and efficient immigration system.

The New Democrat Coalition has created an Immigration Taskforce and is outlining, for the first time, basic principles for reforming our country's broken immigration system in order to drive a productive conversation on immigration reform that uses the following criteria:

· **Growth** – The economic benefits of immigration reform, including creating jobs and spurring innovation and entrepreneurship.
· **Efficiency** – The efficiency of immigration processing and enforcement to stop unlawful immigration.
· **Fairness** – The need to ensure that those who reside in the United States are paying taxes and that there is a level playing field for businesses and workers.
· **Inclusion** – The inclusion of those in our communities who want to make right by the law and contribute to our country, pay taxes and integrate by learning English and American civics.

NDC Basic Principles

Principle 1: Reform our employment-based and family-based immigration system to reduce bureaucratic backlogs, ensure family reunification and spur job growth, innovation, entrepreneurship and American competitiveness in the global economy. It is not surprising that 40% of Fortune 500 companies have been founded by immigrants or the children of immigrants, as research has demonstrated that immigrants and their children are more inclined to take the risk of opening a new business. Employment-based legal immigration should be geared toward encouraging new investment in American technologies and products through investor and entrepreneur visas, and encourage high-skilled workers and innovators to create American jobs to ensure the United States maintains its competitiveness in the global economy through a focus on recruiting and retaining more individuals with a STEM education. We must also create a dedicated funding stream to invest in our domestic pipeline through STEM education to prepare U.S. students and workers for jobs in the new economy.

Family unity has been the cornerstone of immigration for generations, and America's immigration policy should be designed to strengthen those family bonds. Moreover, family-based immigration and the United States' commitment to taking in refugees have been a source of economic growth in our country, growing the number of family-run small businesses and jumpstarting innovation. The founders of Google, Intel, Yahoo!, and eBay are immigrants who came to this country legally through family-based visas or as refugees.

Both our employment and family-based immigration systems should be recognized as much-needed sources of economic growth and should be reformed to be more efficient. Part of that involves restoring judicial discretion to ensure fairness in the application of immigration laws. In the interest of having a smarter, more effective immigration system, we also must be able to act when additional temporary and permanent employment-based visas are needed, based on changing economic needs to fill legitimate gaps in our workforce and to meet both

seasonal and long-term labor needs of the agriculture industry and other industries seeking workers with specific skills. When we discuss family-based immigration, it is critical to reduce visa backlogs and make reforms that are focused on keeping families together, including bi-national same-sex couples.

Principle 2: **Ensure sufficient resources are dedicated to border enforcement, while recognizing the importance of having smart enforcement and investments in infrastructure and resources that will ensure fluid legal trade, travel, and tourism.** The U.S. has invested more funding and boots-on-the ground to secure the nation's borders. Given the billions of dollars invested in border security, we should have reliable measurements and metrics of progress in terms of security, as well as data to measure the efficiency of legitimate commerce. We must also continue to advocate for the necessary personnel, infrastructure, and security improvements to stop the flow of unlawful immigration, human smuggling, and the trafficking of arms and drugs at all of our borders and ports of entry. While we must sustain these efforts, we should seek to do so in a way that also better facilitates the secure flow of trade and commerce. We recognize that border communities are essential gateways for transnational commerce and should not be subject to enforcement-only treatment, given that trade, travel and tourism are critical to our economic growth and prosperity. More than $2.3 trillion in trade passed through America's ports of entry in FY12, and the 350 million travelers visiting the U.S. supported 10 million American jobs.

We also must ensure that we have a more effective, safer, and faster way of processing tourist visas in order to address growing congestion at major points of entry. At the same time, we must expand the visa waiver program to include our allies and to reflect improved capabilities to track travelers entering and exiting the U.S, as well as promote tourism and commerce between the U.S. and other nations. Additionally, we must ensure that our immigration system supports the needs of international trade, especially of our bi-lateral and multi-lateral trade agreements.

Principle 3: **Ensure any mandatory employment verification system not only prevents illegal employment, but also does not place an undue burden on business owners, while also ensuring the protection of all American workers.** The creation of a mandatory employment verification system is the one aspect of a comprehensive immigration reform package that would impact the lives of every American worker, regardless of whether they were born in this country or not. Given that the likely system to be used is E-Verify, we would propose that any mandatory use of E-Verify or other employment verification systems also include provisions to address privacy concerns to protect American workers, minimize bureaucracy around issues of employment, ensure the best technology is used to protect workers from identity theft and not place an undue burden on business owners, in particular small and rural businesses that are disproportionately affected. We must ensure that there is a certification of database accuracy, the inclusion of due process protections for workers who are incorrectly identified through the system and provisions such as a phase-in to minimize the burden on business owners.

Principle 4: **Address the undocumented immigrants who are part of our communities.** As a country, we must ensure the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. have the opportunity to work toward permanent residency with a path to earned citizenship within a reasonable timeframe after registering with the federal government, paying taxes, submitting to a criminal background check, and learning American civics and English. We believe there should be a fast-track for undocumented young people who have studied in the United States and were brought to this country as children, through no fault of their own, consistent with the framework of the DREAM Act, which passed out of the House on a bipartisan vote in the 111th Congress. In the case of farm workers, we believe in the need for earned citizenship with a faster time line due to their

experience working in the agriculture industry. We should also ensure that we have a naturalization process that is accessible, with a focus on immigrant integration and education.