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that decision entails the rights and obligations accorded to those who live here.

There is much at stake on this presidential election. Hot-button issues include the war in Iraq, this nation's mortgage crisis, and, of course, the need to fix a broken immigration system. As immigrants, we have the added responsibility to ensure that the candidates do not lose sight of this issue. It is our obligation to not only push for immigration reforms that benefit the masses, but also to vote for the president who will make sound and informed decisions in dealing with this dilemma.

The Candidates on Immigration

Both Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Barack Obama (D-IL) have made promises to place immigration as a top item in their agendas. However, given their prior voting patterns, neither



candidate has maintained a consistent commitment to his position on immigration (*see www.ontheissues.org/default.htm*).

John McCain: Republican Presidential Candidate

McCain cosponsored a bill in 2006 that would have legalized millions of immigrants, created a guest-worker program, and strengthened border control. As the presidential candidate for the Republican Party that believes "border security is essential to national security," he has to assuage his party's concerns and continue his more humane approach to immigration reform (*see www.gop.com/pdf/PlatformFINAL_WithCover.pdf*). Specifically, McCain was a coauthor of a bill that favored legalizing millions of undocumented, while the Republican Party opposes amnesty. How will he, as president, promote the type of immigration that is most beneficial to all?

McCain also has expressed support for holding employers accountable for knowingly hiring unauthorized workers and supports E-verify, U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) electronic tracking system that would help employers more accurately screen workers. E-verify may actually expose unauthorized aliens to the government as employers extend the reach of DHS employers' human resource departments. Thus, it is crucial to understand all consequences of this very controversial program

before endorsing it as an ideal solution to reduce unauthorized employment.

Although his positions on immigration do not vary dramatically from his opponent, Obama, McCain continues to face pressure from his party which diverts his position and commitment to a comprehensive solution favoring immigrants. From an immigration perspective, McCain's biggest weakness is his inability to withstand pressure from his conservative party, as well as his response to that pressure by shifting his priorities from comprehensive solutions to border security.

Sarah Palin: Republican Vice-Presidential Candidate

McCain's running mate, Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska, has taken no previous action and has made no statements on immigration. However, she has been identified as a supporter of Pat Buchanan during his 2000 presidential campaign, who is best known as one of the most anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic politicians in the United States.

If McCain is elected as the next president, Palin assumes the role not only of vice president, but also as President of the Senate of the United States. In that role, she would have the tie-breaking vote in the Senate on any immigration issue that arises.

Due to the highly controversial and difficult immigration issues that have been presented in Congress over the past four years, including, but not limited to the DREAM Act, comprehensive immigration reform (CIR), Material Support, and E-Verify regulations, it is possible that Palin could be the tie-breaking vote for immigration legislation that she has absolutely no background or previous voting record.

Barack Obama: Democratic Presidential Candidate

Obama's voting record in the Senate closely parallels McCain's voting record. He has voted to strengthen border controls and supports building a fence to increase border security. Obama supported the CIR bill supporting family unification, as well as meeting demand for positions that employers cannot find U.S. workers to fill.

He also has expressed support for making the current citizenship process shorter, easier, and less expensive for legal immigrants seeking citizenship. Obama believes that employers should be held accountable for hiring unauthorized workers (which may result in a move toward E-verify). Like his opponent and his running mate, Obama believes in creating a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

In the past, Obama has faced criticism for voting for five amendments designed to kill the

Senate's bipartisan immigration reform deal. However, throughout his campaigning, he has promoted an agenda to find a balance between immigrants and laws, and his voting record, especially in recent times, has reflected that goal. Overall, Obama is consistent with the Democratic Party's immigration platform in supporting a system that "requires undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, pay taxes, learn English, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens" (*see www.democrats.org/a/national/american_community/immigration/*).

Joseph Biden: Democratic Vice-Presidential Candidate

Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE) maintains that it is impractical to deport approximately 12-14 million illegal immigrants, and has supported Bush's plan to create a border fence as well as pathways to citizenship. However, his support for



the border fence comes from the desire to tackle drug trafficking rather than to halt illegal crossings. Like McCain and Obama, Biden voted in favor of CIR and has stated that Americans have an obligation to repair the broken immigration system. He supports employer sanctions as well as a guest worker program. Biden also voted to allow undocumented aliens to participate in Social Security and supports legislation for earned citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently in the United States.

Biden is dependable as a consistent proponent for immigration reform. His views and voting record reflect an understanding of the issues American faces, as well as a commitment to finding viable solutions. Out of all four players in this election, Biden is most likely to support powerful changes which will improve the lives of immigrants.

Independent Candidates

The other independent candidates fall within different areas of the immigration spectrum. America's Independent Party candidate Alan Keyes is anti-immigration and has pledged to deploy a minimum of 30,000 troops to bolster security measures around the entire perimeter of the contiguous territory of the United States if elected president (*see www.aipnews.com/talk/forums/thread-view.asp?tid=125&posts=2*).

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