

## BUSINESS LEADERS REACH CONSENSUS ON DACA AND ID AND TAX SOLUTION AT AMEGY BANK TOWN HALL IN HOUSTON

Posted by Marek Brothers on July 6, 2022



*Authored by Charles Frantes and originally published on TexasGOPVote.com*

Business leaders met recently at Amegy Bank in Houston for a town hall discussion on the need for immigration reform to alleviate unprecedented labor shortages as the number of open jobs in the US remains at an all-time high . Experts on immigration policy made the case for bipartisan legislation that includes border security, a solution for DACA , and an ID and Tax policy that would create a method for unauthorized immigrants to earn legal status. After some questions and discussion, most if not all of the roughly 100 business leaders in attendance seemed to agree that these reforms were sensible and needed.

Linda Lorelle, Emmy award-winning journalist and entrepreneur , led a panel discussion between Stan Marek, President and CEO of the Marek Family of Companies , Lilyanne McClean, Strategic Consultant, and Jacob Monty, Managing Partner of Monty & Ramirez LLP , which highlighted challenges and solutions associated with an outdated immigration system in need of reform.

Marek, who leads a large commercial and residential specialty construction firm in an industry that is constantly held back by workforce shortages, highlighted negative societal and economic impacts of having a large number of unauthorized immigrants who are unable to legally work for taxpaying employers.

*"We have an estimated 700,000 undocumented immigrants in Houston. They're here, they've been here a long time. Hundreds of thousands of them are kids. At the same time we need labor, people who will work for us, who we can give skills and safety training and give them a career..."* said Marek.

*"The thing that hurts the most is seeing kids who are our future workforce being totally marginalized. For example, in HISD, we have something like 800,000 kids, and the estimates are that around 30% of them are undocumented. These are kids who we are going to take through grade school, middle school, and high school, and when they graduate, I can't hire them. Then they've got to go work as a waiter or waitress, or on some housing site as an independent contractor not paying taxes. That's our future workforce,"* said Marek, pointing out the irony of investing in children's education and then hindering their ability to contribute back to society through taxpaying and productive careers.

*"People talk about solving our workforce issues, HISD has all these kids who are going to graduate that we can't hire . Some of them drop out, because why graduate if you can't get a job? It's a broken system,"* he added.

Marek explained that the simple yet politically complicated solution to this situation for lawmakers to pass bipartisan ID and Tax legislation. Such a policy would create a method for unauthorized immigrants to earn legal status and also provide improvements to border security and enforcement against payroll fraud. It would also help to alleviate workforce shortages and improve the productivity of our future workforce in addition to improving national security and decreasing future illegal immigration.

*"If someone is here, we need to know who they are for national security. This legal status we are talking about will be for undocumented immigrants who have been here for say five years, maybe 70% of people have been here for five years, and they're going to have a background check, be finger printed, and entered into the system, and then have legal status. That means they can work for a legitimate taxpaying employer, it doesn't mean they can get welfare or vote, they're never going to vote unless something changes down the road, and that gives Republican lawmakers a reason to do it. Let's face it, most of them don't care about voting, most of them just want to get a drivers license and work to support their families,"* said Marek on details of ID and Tax.

*"If people knew that they couldn't get a job unless they had a federally sponsored ID, and if all employers said we're not gonna hire you unless you have this federally sponsored ID, people aren't going to come. They're coming for one main reason: jobs,"* added Marek on the benefits of an ID and Tax policy that would crack down on payroll fraud.

Marek also highlighted the significant fiscal benefit that would come from an ID and Tax policy that allows and encourages unauthorized immigrants to begin working as employees for taxpaying employers as opposed to working off the books or as independent subcontractors.

*"For every million people that you take out of the underground economy and put on a payroll, that's 15 cents of every dollar earned going to federal taxes. That's around **\$4.75 billion per year** for every million people. Social security would love to have that money, but what if that money came in for border security? Think about that, undocumented workers earning legal status, employers withholding taxes, and it goes to the government for border security. Multiply that by 10 and its **\$47 billion a year**, we can really do some things,"* said Marek, explaining how an ID and Tax policy could pay for border security itself by increasing fiscal revenues without increasing any taxes on lawful taxpayers.

*"I'm not for the 'wall all the way,' but we need some walls. We need to be able to funnel people in where we can control it. We also need more boots on the ground, we need 21st century technology, and the undocumented can pay for it with ID and Tax,"* he added.

The speakers also placed emphasis on the need for a legislative solution for DACA, a program that was created 10 years ago that has allowed roughly 700,000 unauthorized immigrants that came to the US as children before 2012 to earn legal status and work permits, ultimately helping to increase their economic and societal contributions. The program and the legal-status it provides many young immigrants faces risk of termination as an upcoming federal court hearing in July could issue a ruling that the program must be terminated because it was established through executive order and not legislation. In addition, a solution is needed for young Dreamers who are graduating high school and cannot enter the legal workforce because they do not qualify for DACA because they came to the US after 2012.

*"DACA kids should have a path to citizenship because they've already been in the system for 10 years, paid the price, and weren't brought here on their own accord,"* said Marek.

*"Stan is absolutely right, he's been right about this for a long time. DACA is a no-brainer,"* said McClean.

Speakers also acknowledged the political challenges associated with passing immigration-related legislation in a polarized Congress, and called on Republicans and Democrats to work together on the issue to pass a beneficial solution that the majority of Americans agree on.

*"You've got 10% on the left and 10% on the right controlling the debate for the 80% of us in the middle. We the voters have to stand up to our lawmakers and demand that we get DACA, that's low hanging fruit, and then let's work on ID and Tax,"* said Marek.

*"We have not had major legislation in this area since 1986. Major legislation is a thing of the past. Congress does not work like that anymore,"* said McClean.

McClean pointed out that much of the national conversation around immigration reform is centered on the border, and that improvements to border security are a must have for any type of immigration reform to have a chance at passing.

*"The conversation about the border cannot be ignored. There is going to have to be some sort of acknowledgement. One of the biggest complaints that I've heard from Republicans, certainly while I've been in Texas, is that "the business community loves to talk to me about immigration, but when I ask them about border security, everyone leaves the room," said McClean.*

Jacob Monty commented that *"Democrats do need to come to terms with some meaningful asylum and refugee reform. In my opinion, someone who has been here 20 years deserves more equity than someone who got here last week. It's hard to get Democrats to accept that argument. Equity matters, and people get frustrated when they see hoards coming over and think 'well is it a free-for-all.'"*

During the panel discussion, Episode 12: Finding Solutions – The ID & Tax Proposal, of the free to view Rational Middle of Immigration docuseries was screened and received a large applause. In the video, business leaders and immigration experts explained the needs for and benefits of creating a policy to ID and Tax unauthorized immigrants.

A town hall discussion between the panel and event attendees proved to be educational for many.

One member of the audience said we should have a fair immigration system that does not allow unauthorized immigrants to cut in front of immigrants in the legal immigration system, asking *"why can't they just get in line."*

Monty explained that under current law, most if not all unauthorized immigrants do not have a viable pathway to earn legal status.

*"We get a call every week from someone, typically a strong Republican, who says 'we need to help this guy, we just found out he's undocumented, he's a general manager earning \$120,000 a year, I don't care what it costs, sign him up.' However, if he entered without inspection as most of the undocumented did, even if he marries a US citizen, there's nothing we can do to help him unless he leaves the country, and once he leaves the country he's subject to a 10 or 20 year bar from readmittance,"* said Monty.

*"For most of the undocumented, there's no way to get legal. There is no line. That is a big fallacy out there,"* he added.

Another attendee asked if unauthorized immigrants would be willing to sign up for an ID and Tax policy that requires them to register with the federal government and pay income taxes.

Linda Lorelle explained that she had personally asked a DACA recipient if they and any other people in their community who are undocumented would be willing to come out of the shadows and sign up for an ID and Tax program, and that he said *"yes, in a heartbeat."*

Marek added that he would be happy to pay a fine to the federal government to sponsor unauthorized immigrants to earn work permits so that he could legally employ them.

*"You tell me I can go hire those workers who are undocumented who are working on that building over there, who used to work for me ten years ago, I'll pay a \$500 fine, their fine, to have them earn legal status so I can them back on my payroll,"* said Marek.

*"It takes me a lot more than \$500 to train a worker, and those workers are here," he added.*

Another event attendee expressed his newfound support for ID and Tax.

*"To be honest, when I came in I was a little bit skeptical, but now that I've seen the Rational Middle film and heard the presentation, I'm all for it. I think we need to do something. These problems exist. I'm big on balancing the federal budget...Let's do something to fix things, let's rebuild our economy, and bringing more workers in is the way to do it. I've heard of restaurants closing because they don't have enough staff...having a plan, getting people documented and into the system to where they are paying taxes, contributing to social security and contributing more to society, I think is good for our country as a whole," he said.*

**Tags:**

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