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SJR-2 Immigration reform. (2021-2022)

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Senate Joint Resolution No. 2

CHAPTER 128

Relative to immigration reform.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 10, 2021.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 2, Hueso. Immigration reform.

This measure would urge the Congress of the United States to work with President Joseph R. Biden to pass comprehensive immigration reform guided by empathy, inclusion, and opportunity, as provided.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, There are an estimated 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, with 2.5 million calling California home; and

WHEREAS, One in 10 California workers is undocumented, and a logical and streamlined pathway to citizenship would stimulate the economy by allowing undocumented immigrants to get college degrees, buy homes, start new companies, and create legal, tax-paying jobs, finally affording them a chance at the American Dream; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress last enacted major immigration legislation more than 30 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. It is vital that immigrant students who receive Doctorates or Masters degrees from American universities be given the opportunity to contribute to the economy after receiving an American education; and

WHEREAS, Our national interests and security are not well-served by an outdated, inefficient, and slow-moving immigration system.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, Immigrants are a vital and productive part of California and the country's economy and are active in a variety of industries, including technology and agriculture, and they represent a large share of our new small business owners, creating economic prosperity and needed jobs for everyone; and

WHEREAS, More than 16 million Americans share a home with at least one family member who is undocumented. Keeping families, business owners, and hard workers in the shadows of society serves no one, and fragmenting family units is detrimental to everyone; 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, including the over 640,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, and should expand asylum eligibility for those fleeing dangerous environments hoping for safety and opportunity; and

WHEREAS, President Joseph R. Biden unveiled a comprehensive immigration bill in the first week in office, one that focuses on maintaining families together while valuing immigrants' contributions to our nation, and emphasizing the need for a timely and nuanced response to our currently defective immigration system. President Biden's emphasis presents a monumental opportunity to finally resolve a long-standing issue; and

WHEREAS, Language is critical to how one understands and perceives immigration issues, and President Joseph R. Biden's immigration bill includes a provision to replace the term "alien" with "noncitizen" in United States immigration laws, showcasing the importance of encompassing reforms that model empathy in their actions and dignity in their language; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature urges the Congress of the United States to work with President Joseph R. Biden to pass comprehensive immigration reform guided by empathy, inclusion, and opportunity, as described in this resolution and in President Biden's immigration plan; and be it further

Resolved, That immigration reform should include an emphasis on: (1) maintaining family structures, (2) creating a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients, (3) expanding eligibility for asylum seekers, (4) upgrading the current visa programs in order to have a legal workforce and a system that better enforces labor protections, (5) eliminating the term "alien" from all immigration laws, and (6) upholding due process as well as the inherent rights of all immigrants; 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.