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National South Asian Organization Reacts to House Republican Immigration Principles

Almost one year after the immigration reform debate began, the House Republican leadership finally revealed their principles on immigration reform today. By releasing these principles, the House Republican leadership is acknowledging the importance of working towards solutions to fix our country's immigration system. However, the principles, as stated currently, raise more questions than answers, and do not reflect the needs of South Asian immigrants in the United States.

"We have heard from South Asian immigrants around the country, including undocumented immigrants who seek a path to citizenship, family members who wish to reunite with loved ones through the family-based visa system, and students and workers who seek meaningful pathways to employment and more than a "temporary status" in the United States," said Deepa Iyer, Executive Director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). "Unfortunately, the House Republican leadership's immigration principles are out of touch with the needs of South Asian and other immigrants who are building lives and communities as well as small businesses in our country."

Instead, the principles dismiss the needs of family members, emphasize harsh enforcement measures and flawed systems such as E-verify, and offer a path to legalization but not citizenship for most undocumented immigrants. The principles suggest that family relationships should be considered with less weight, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the role that immigrants who benefit from the family-based system play in our nation's economic growth. Furthermore, a path to "legalization" rather than citizenship for most undocumented persons would only create a "second class" category of people without equal rights or access to public benefits.

"It appears that the House Republican Leadership has finally decided to engage in the conversation on immigration reform, which is a step in the right direction," said Manar Waheed, Policy Director at SAALT. "Still, the point of immigration reform is to *improve* our system, not create one that is more burdensome and fails to understand the realities of immigrant communities."

Last year, the [National Coalition of South Asian Organizations \(NCSO\)](#), a coalition of 41 groups around the United States that works closely with South Asian immigrants, released [immigration principles](#) emphasizing the needs of South Asian immigrants. SAALT will continue to work with our partner organizations and policymakers to highlight and advocate around these principles as the debate on immigration reform moves forward.