Dear President-Elect Obama:

We, the undersigned organizations representing the communities and families of both immigrant and native-born Americans across the country, sincerely congratulate you on your victory as the next President of the United States.

As the son of an immigrant from Africa and a woman from Kansas, we believe that your victory represents a triumph for tolerance and hope and a powerful validation of the American Dream. We believe that you appreciate and give voice to the dreams and ideals that inspire immigrants to struggle for acceptance and a better life every day. We also believe that your experience as a community organizer in Chicago provides you special insight into the hardships of others. We stand prepared to work with you and your Administration to advance policies that will benefit all Americans and to continue the movement that you articulated in your campaign beyond partisan politics and towards solutions that strengthen and secure our nation and the world.

In the 2008 elections, immigrant voters and their families turned out across the nation in unprecedented numbers. They were inspired by your message, including your commitment to a comprehensive reform of our nation’s immigration system. The reform challenge is formidable, but so is our resolve. We stand shoulder to shoulder with you to realistically address the nation’s immigration challenges, to end the divisiveness that has poisoned the immigration debate, and to unite America as both a secure and welcoming nation. We urge you to make the reform of our immigration system an early priority in the new Congress and Administration.

The urgency for reform cannot be overstated. Over the last eight years, immigrants and their families, employers and workers alike, have suffered from our nation’s inability to find common ground on the issue of immigration reform. Indiscriminate immigration raids have caused trauma and hardship for thousands of individuals. Such raids separate families, destroy communities, and threaten the basic rights of immigrants and U.S. citizens alike. A new and vast detention system has resulted in violations of basic due process rights, the deaths of immigrants - including legal permanent residents - in detention, and endanger the basic civil liberties of all Americans. A patchwork of state and local immigration enforcement initiatives has only served to damage trust among immigrant communities and law enforcement officials and undermine public safety. Enforcement-only measures, like employment verification and use of Social Security No Match letters, have placed new burdens on employers and risk doing significant harm to our federal budget and our fragile economy. The rights of workers have also been undermined by enforcement strategies that fail to take into account labor laws and the exploitation of undocumented workers. Migrants desperate for a better life continue to meet their deaths at our borders. Meanwhile, legal immigration channels are not a viable option because some citizens have to wait for more than two decades to sponsor close family members because of egregious visa backlogs and the federal government has
failed to use available channels to reunite America’s families. The suffering caused by these practices and experiences underscores the problems with current U.S. immigration policies and the pressing need for reform.

Now is the time to turn the page on the failed immigration policies of the last eight years. Your Administration will be the first new steward of immigration policy since the immigration functions of the federal government were subsumed into the Department of Homeland Security. A new tone must be set in the Department of Homeland Security that instills a culture of professionalism, service, security and respect for fundamental rights. Under your leadership, the nation can at last balance three national imperatives: to enhance national security, facilitate economic growth and promote our nation’s core values and traditions. Unless and until we recalibrate our policies, all Americans’ rights will be at risk, our communities will be divided and the power of nation’s fundamental principle of E Pluribus Unum compromised.

As you showed in your campaign, it is possible to transcend obstacles when genuine leadership and political will unite. We agree that this nation is greater than the sum of its parts. We look forward to working with you and your Administration in bringing this nation together and in creating change that all of us can believe in.

Thank you, Mr. President-Elect, and please accept our very best wishes.

Signed:

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