

# eliminating racism empowering women

ywca

## Immigration and Immigrants' Rights

According to the 2000 census, there are over 30 million immigrants in the U.S., representing 11 percent of the total population; and an estimated one in five children in the U.S. is a child of an immigrant. These immigrants and their children contribute to our communities, economy and our culture. The United States is one of the most diverse nations today, thanks to the millions of immigrants who have enriched our culture and contributed to our economic growth. The discussion of immigration reform and immigrants' rights has gained national attention over the past years. Issues including border security, jobs and documentation have been raised.

Supporters of immigration reform and tougher immigration laws argue that individuals who do not follow the immigration laws of the United States should not be rewarded for their behavior by being eligible to become citizens. These individuals argue that there is a legal process for entering the United States and individuals should follow all applicable laws and processes.

Advocates for immigrant rights counter that policies considered by local communities, and state and federal governments have covered a range of issues from border security to the economy but have not always focused on a broader issue of how immigration reform policies and practices impact individuals and families. Some advocates further argue that while all immigration reform policies affect immigrant individuals and families; rarely has the well-being of women and children been at the forefront of the consideration in these discussions, nor has specific situations involving women and children been addressed. For example, immigrant women may face unique circumstances including being trafficked into the United States or experience domestic violence. Immigration reform policies should include how to address the circumstances and needs of these victims.

### **YWCA Position**

Though border security and the economic needs of our country are important aspects of the immigration debate, the discussion should not be limited to these issues. Any discussion on immigration should include how to best protect the welfare of immigrant women, girls and their families including those who are victims of violence and trafficking.

### **Candidate Questions**

Immigration Reform is a hot topic. What is your policy position on immigration reform?

What is your strategy for assisting immigrant women who are trafficked into this country against their will?

What policy proposals do you support to help immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence?

Marriage promotion and family formation are important in policy discussions. As President, what actions will you take to ensure that children who are United States citizens are able to stay in intact families, even if their parents are undocumented?

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## Judicial Nominations

Courts and judges across the country make many important and vital decisions that affect women and families. Judges have the ability to make landmark decisions that have national implications on laws affecting women's rights, civil rights, the rights of individuals with disabilities, workers rights, immigrant rights and more.

While most people know about the role of the Supreme Court and understand the importance of a Supreme Court judge, far fewer pay attention to the lower federal courts. Yet these courts can have an even greater effect on the law than the Supreme Court. While the Supreme Court typically hears fewer than 100 cases a year, the federal courts of appeal, which are the courts that are immediately below the Supreme Court, decide almost 30,000 cases a year. Further, federal judges are appointed for life and have the power to change the nation for decades to come.

Advocates on one both sides of the debate argue that it is important to pay attention to who is elected President because they will have the opportunity to propose individuals to serve as judges on the Supreme Court and the federal courts of appeal. The next President of the United States, for example, may have the opportunity to appoint at least one new member to the United States Supreme Court and the legislative philosophy of that individual will have an impact on important laws.

When it comes to making appointments, some argue that the President should support judges who will take a historical view of the law. These individuals maintain that the President should support judges who will uphold a strict interpretation of the law based on the understanding of the law at the time the United States Constitution was written. These individuals also believe that the judicial branch of government should not interpret the law in a way that makes public policy decisions. They argue that such a function belongs to the legislative branch.

Others argue that the President should not support judges who, when deciding cases, limit their analysis to how the laws were interpreted years ago. These individuals instead argue that the President should support judges and courts who will take a different approach to making court decisions. These individuals believe that a judge should look at the history of the issue and the intent of the elected officials who wrote the law, but also consider how the law works in modern day society and with modern day practices and policies.

### **YWCA Position**

The Judicial Branch of government plays an important role in protecting the civil rights, civil liberties women's rights and the rights of all. Being aware of the selection and appointments of individuals to judicial positions, especially to the US Supreme Court, and their positions on civil rights and civil liberties, is important to protecting the rights and well-beings of women, children and men in our country.

### **Candidate Questions**

What is your position on judicial nominations?

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## Voter Protection

Voting is the single most important tool that women and people of color have to help shape the policies that are going to affect every aspect of their lives. In 1870, the 15th Amendment to the Constitution gave all men, regardless of race or color the right to vote. Yet, many states continued to use various methods to prevent people of color from voting, including literacy tests, poll taxes, the disenfranchisement of former inmates, intimidation, threats, and even violence. Today, barriers to voting still exist for many through purging legal voters off of voter lists, providing false and misleading information to voters who live in low-income areas, disenfranchisement of former inmates, and even acts of intimidation.

There are two sides to the voter protection debate. On one side argues that voter protection should focus on protecting the integrity and legitimacy of the voting process by ensuring that only citizens, and not people who are legally ineligible to vote, vote in elections. These individuals believe that when people, who are not legally able to vote, cast ballots their ballot may cancel out the vote of a United States citizen and thus the result of the election may be flawed.

The other side of the debate argues that voter protection should focus on protecting the rights of voters to exercise their right to vote. These individuals argue that the main concern for voter protection efforts should be to prevent and address activities that interfere with voter's abilities to cast their ballots. They believe that all eligible voters must be able to vote without the threat or fear of intimidation, disenfranchise or other questionable tactics. Voters should not have to fear being purged from voter roles or that false and misleading information may be given to them or others in their communities regarding voting locations and their rights.

### **YWCA Position**

The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy and every eligible person in the United States should be able to routinely, easily and successfully exercise his or her right to vote. Practices and tactics which disenfranchise voters undermine voters' constitutionally protected right to vote.

### **Candidate Questions**

If elected what would you do to ensure that all eligible voters are able to participate in the electoral process?

What steps to you believe need to be put in place to protect voters' rights?