Immigrants as Part of Biden's Build Back Better Recovery Package

On March 31, President Biden introduced the first part of his infrastructure package. This part focused on improving the nation's physical infrastructure—including roads, railroads, ports, water systems, electricity grids, internet broadband, and airports.

Next, we expect the Biden administration to announce the human infrastructure component of this package. Immigrant essential workers are integral to it and must be included.

Also, on March 31—César Chávez Day—First Lady Dr. Jill Biden visited California’s Central Valley to meet with farmworkers and highlight the need for vaccination equity against COVID-19, as well as immigration reform for undocumented essential workers and rest of the 11 million people living without papers in this country.

Reconciliation and Filibuster

The president and first lady’s focus on immigrant workers on March 31, and the need to realize the president’s vision for broader reform, occurs in a changing political reality. As the YES to Immigrants Agenda moves out of the House, the focus turns to the U. S. Senate.

Absent 10 Republican votes to break the current filibuster threshold, there are two possibilities for passing some or all of these bills with 50 votes plus Vice President Harris’s tie-breaking vote:

- The immigration bills could be folded into the budget reconciliation process used to pass the American Rescue Plan, the president’s COVID-19 relief package. Political will and the Senate parliamentarian will decide what parts of these bills are squeezed in and deemed eligible for reconciliation.

- There is growing momentum for a reform of the Senate filibuster, which President Obama called a “relic of the Jim Crow era.” If and when Senate leaders reform the filibuster to allow passage of congressional and presidential priorities, CHIRLA commits to ensuring that immigration stands alongside progressive priorities such as voting rights, climate change, and police reform.