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Published: June 10, 2009

As we've all learned, there are certain things in life that you can count on: taxes, flowers in the spring and that good fences make good neighbors. And that immigration reform is an issue that we should deal with soon. The simple fact is that the issue is too big, too emotional and will affect most us in one way or another. The other important point thing to note is that it is also an extremely divisive issue. We need to confront the issue, resolve what the next steps will be and then implement a game plan. If you have any doubts about the emotions involved, take a look at the online comments that are posted to almost any immigration related article. There have been plenty of fork-in-the-road issues that our country has dealt with in the past: busing and civil rights to name just two. The key is that we dealt with them. The issues that involve immigration need to be dealt with now.

Irrespective of the position you take on immigration reform, it seems that traction is building to deal with the issue this year. This past week, Senate majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) voiced his preference on the issue. Senator Reid was at a news conference with Hispanic leaders, who were providing support for Supreme Court candidate Sonia Sotomayor, when he said that a comprehensive immigration bill "is going to happen this session, but I want it this year, if at all possible." Reid also mentioned that it was one of his top three priorities for 2009, along with health care and energy.

The last time the issue of immigration reform was considered was in 2007. That measure failed in the Senate. The result is that the issues that were raised in 2007 are still waiting for us to consider and resolve. The issues involved in immigration reform that need to be addressed are numerous and complex. Once Congress takes up some of the narrow immigration issues that must be dealt with this year (i.e. E-Verify), it's hopeful that the other larger immigration reform issues will be dealt with as well.

As the Washington Post recently reported, House Democrats have indicated a willingness to address the immigration issues first. This is a good sign as it could and should get the national debate focused on addressing the core issues and debating and determining the best long-term solutions.

The Obama administration has recently confirmed that an immigration summit with many key lawmakers will be held on June 17. The meeting had originally been scheduled for June 8 but was delayed due to the president's travel schedule. The purpose of the summit is to identify issues where there is agreement and where greater effort is needed to achieve broader consensus.

Washington being Washington, it's certainly possible that meaningful discussions concerning immigration reform could get bumped again this year to the back burner. Immigration, after all, is an issue that some lawmakers would probably not want to be heard on. Just initiating a discussion involving immigration reform will be difficult. However, it is an issue that requires our leaders to be bold, to speak their minds and then agree on long-term solutions.

Our country's previous leaders have dealt with any number of troubling and difficult issues. It's time for our current leaders to do the same. The issues involved in immigration reform have simply gotten too big to ignore any longer. With an economy in trouble and many Americans out of work, it would be relatively easy to ignore the issue again. However, dealing with the contentious issues that are at the heart of immigration reform, coming up with a real plan and then implementing it is in our best interests. That's one more thing we can all count on.

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