



INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Two years ago, some Republican lawmakers floated a proposal to require all undocumented workers wishing to become Americans to first return to their countries of origin and apply for U.S. citizenship.

Here's how Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano characterized that proposal in a February 2007 [speech](#) at the National Press Club: "What a joke."

"That would be like asking everyone who lives in New York City and Los Angeles to get up and move," Napolitano said, noting that many of those workers risked their lives to come to the United States or were brought here as children, and have children who are themselves U.S. citizens. "That presumes we have the administrative and legal infrastructure to handle such a mass exodus. We don't."

"We must have the courage to talk openly and honestly with the American people about the need to address immigration. And we must have federal legislation that is reality-based," Napolitano said.

As President-elect Barack Obama's choice to lead the Homeland Security Department, Napolitano will have an opportunity to pursue reality-based proposals of her own. Some of them are likely to involve the Secure Border Initiative, the Bush administration's multi-year plan for reducing illegal immigration and bolstering protections at U.S. borders.

"I think the new administration is clearly going to look at the whole SBI program and see what is the best strategy going forward," said John Mayer, a vice president at consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton in McLean, Va. "Gov. Napolitano is very familiar with border operations and the impact SBI has had on the states."

As a former federal prosecutor and border-state governor, Napolitano has an understanding of the security and economic implications of what she has called

failed federal immigration and security policies. In mid-2006, with an estimated 4,000 immigrants then crossing Arizona's 376-mile border from Mexico every day, she declared a state of emergency and deployed the National Guard.

But Napolitano also has been critical of the physical barrier the Bush administration has been building along much of the southwest border. "As I often say, 'You show me a 50-foot wall, and I'll show you a 51-foot ladder,'" Napolitano told the Press Club audience.

Mayer believes any redirection of SBI needs to be risk-based. "There are a lot of ways you can do border security. You can build fences, hire more Border Patrol agents, use unmanned aerial vehicles and cameras. None of these by themselves is the right answer, yet if they're integrated into a program that you balance with risk analytics, I think you can come up with a pretty sound border protection program that will not only work but be efficient in terms of allocation of resources," he said. Homeland Security needs to do a better job of developing strategies and plans that are integrated across agencies within the department, according to Mayer. For example, he said, border security strategy must involve support from DHS' Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau, not just the Border Patrol and Customs and Border Protection.

"A new secretary has the opportunity to be able to start with what's been accomplished over the last five years and really push this concept of one department in terms of how they collectively look at the missions across the department," Mayer said.