

**From:** [March, Joseph H.](#)  
**To:** [Public Relations Division](#)  
**Subject:** News Release: American Legion calls on White House, Congress to reject Amnesty  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 30, 2013 4:17:08 PM  
**Importance:** High

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **American Legion calls on White House, Congress to reject Amnesty**

WASHINGTON ( Jan. 30, 2013) –“A bad sequel” is how American Legion National Commander James E. Koutz described President Obama’s proposal to grant amnesty to people who are in the United States illegally.

“Whether it’s called ‘Pathway to Citizenship’ or some other euphemism, it’s still amnesty,” Koutz said. “It didn’t work when President Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and it will be even more disastrous if we repeat that mistake again. The proposals coming from the group of senators known as the ‘Gang of 8’ are no better.”

Reagan’s attorney general, Ed Meese, has since repudiated the 1986 amnesty. “After a six-month slowdown that followed the passage of the legislation, illegal immigration returned to normal levels and continued unabated,” Meese wrote in a 2006 New York Times op-ed. “Ultimately, some 2.7 million people were granted amnesty, and many who were not [granted amnesty] stayed anyway, forming the nucleus of today’s unauthorized population.”

The American Legion warned of the consequences back in 1986. “Amnesty can serve only to attract future illegal aliens who would also be provided the opportunity for permanent resident status,” said the Legion’s National Commander at the time, Dale Renaud. Renaud’s prediction was dead-on considering that there are now an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the country – many of them anticipating that the government will soon change their status. Moreover, the Center for Immigration Studies estimates that the total net cost of the 1986 amnesty was more than \$78 billion over the following ten years.

“As far as The American Legion is concerned, amnesty is a deal-breaker for us but there are some measures currently being proposed that we like such as tightening security at the borders, crackdowns on those who hire illegal workers and stricter visa procedures,” Koutz said. “The American Legion is not opposed to immigration. We are a nation that was built by immigrants. But we also believe in adherence to the law. What kind of message does it send to those who worked hard to become legal immigrants if we offer the same status to those who disrespected the process? ‘American citizen’ is a special title that should not be bestowed upon people who broke the law to get it.”

Thorough background screening should be essential before the U.S. government allows any foreign national to even enter U.S. territory, according to Koutz. “Public safety and national security is job one for our government to address,” Koutz added. “Every one of the 9/11 hijackers was an illegal alien in the sense that they all lied to government officials about their true intentions for entering the country. Terrorism attacks by illegal aliens have also been stopped at Fort Dix and in Times Square. We cannot afford to allow these things to happen

again.”

Koutz said that The American Legion is eager to share its views with Congress and the White House to help draft a sensible immigration policy. The American Legion’s positions on the issue can be found by visiting [www.archive.legion.org](http://www.archive.legion.org) and entering “illegal immigration” into the search engine.

“The consequences wrought by the Immigration Reform and Control Act bring to mind the words of George Santayana, ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,’” Koutz said. “Let’s not make the same mistakes again.”

With a current membership of 2.4-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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