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Our borders must be secured before any comprehensive immigration reform. Luckily, border security is the easy part.

The right combination of border infrastructure, personnel and technology – all working in unison – can effectively close smuggling corridors and make it excruciatingly difficult to enter the U.S. illegally.

That's something we can do now. It will be harder, but not impossible, to find consensus on the broader immigration issue. Even current law would suffice, assuming it's consistently and thoroughly enforced – which has not been the case.

What's unfortunate is the Senate, under Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), has showed time and again – starting with its inability to pass a budget – it's unwilling to work toward implementing responsible reforms. All Congress needs to do, short of making workplace enforcement mandatory for all employers, is attach real consequences to any state or locality that refuses to enforce existing immigration law.

One reliable option is to deny federal reimbursement for initiatives such as the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program. Another is to restrict federal funding altogether.

What's the real upside to effective enforcement? It's good for everyone – citizens, legal immigrants and, yes, even illegal immigrants.

Think about it this way: If the American government were as corrupt as the Mexican

government, would you want to live here? If American business were no different than Mexican business, would you want to live here? If America stopped enforcing the laws on its citizens and could not protect you from criminal and drug violence, would you want to live here?

The answer is a resounding no.

Putting enforcement first helps everyone. It helps everyone who pays into Social Security and Medicare. It helps everyone who tries to improve schools or has a real medical emergency. And it helps legal immigrants who are regularly undercut by someone who just crossed the border illegally.

Real immigration reform will take time and a unified Congress and a president who understands amnesty is not the answer. But, without securing the border first and making enforcement a priority, it will only be more difficult, if not near impossible, to accomplish.

So let's get the enforcement part done, so we can eventually move on to the issue of reform.

We are a great nation because we are a nation of laws. Being a nation of laws guarantees that America will always be the country others want to immigrate to and not from. It's our obligation to ensure we stay this way.

To President Barack Obama and to my colleagues in Congress: Put enforcement first and, I guarantee, the debate on immigration will be much more civil and productive.