

PRO-AMERICAN IMMIGRATION

COMMON GROUND IN OUR
IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

GEORGE FARAG



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Common Ground in our Immigration Strategy

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Dedicated to

*My mom, Theresa, for keeping it together at
the airport so many years ago.*

My wife, Jenny, for encouraging me to make my voice heard.

and

*The American people, all of you, for allowing us to
arrive, survive, and thrive in the land of opportunity.*

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INTRODUCTION

Three generations of the same family are American citizens or green card holders—but none of them ever lived in the United States. How is that possible? This is neither a riddle nor a joke. This is an actual family, and they are not alone. There are thousands, if not tens of thousands, of similar families all over the world. The different generations of this kind of family illustrate the disrepair of our immigration system.

To be clear, I am not talking about illegal immigration—I am talking about our legal immigration system. Each year a million people use the legal immigration system to come to America. Most of the discussion on immigration today focuses on illegal immigration. But there are serious gaps in our legal immigration policies that are flying under the radar.

I would know—my family and I immigrated to America as one of the millions of families that came in pursuit of the American dream. We used the same immigration process that millions of others use all over the world.

I was also a United States diplomat and consular officer, or consul. It was my job to approve or deny immigrant and non-immigrant visa applications. I decided on thousands of visa applications while working at American embassies abroad. In each decision, I used US immigration law to guide me.

President George W. Bush appointed me to the diplomatic service. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice confirmed me as a consul. I know the immigration process from the perspective of an immigrant and adjudicator.

Immigration is a hot topic. The situation is fluid, and it feels like immigration news is constantly breaking. As the 2020 presidential election approaches, news on immigration will probably move even faster. Writing about immigration in this atmosphere is challenging. As this book is being printed, there may be changes made to some of the policies explored in the text.

But the enduring principles in this book remain true—immigration to America must be controlled and consistent with US policy. Immigration policy must be to the benefit of America and the American people. The

rules to process immigration applications must be consistent with immigration law. These are principles that all Americans can agree on. However, as we'll see in this book, these principles are not always the reality.

This is why my core message is that we need pro-American immigration. Pro-American immigration is immigration policy that puts the needs of Americans first. The idea is not to expand or limit immigration; it's to fix gaps in our current policies so that they are no longer exploited to the disadvantage of Americans. Pro-American immigration is good for all Americans—it is a common ground in the immigration debate.

WE THE PEOPLE

Immigration is politicized, and extreme points of view are framing the debate. Our lawmakers give the impression that every American is simply for or against immigration—all we hear is either build a wall or build a bridge, keep them out or let them in, and it's an invasion or there aren't enough.

It pains me to see such divisiveness in our country, and I don't think I am alone. I believe many Americans want an alternative. They want reasonable immigration policy that makes sense for all Americans. They want to offer solutions and not just complain about the issues.

The problem is that Congress can't get us there. In 2019, Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) described Congress by saying, "there's just so much hatred there right now and people aren't working together."¹ This hostile environment makes it impossible for lawmakers to have a productive debate on immigration.

This is why I am not recommending that we change our laws. To do so would require Congress to take action through a vote. In our current political environment, a snowball has a better chance of retiring in Miami than Congress has of agreeing on new immigration laws.

Instead, I recommend that American citizens, like you and me, lobby our government agencies for new regulations. Regulations are rules adopted by government agencies that determine how laws are enforced, and the United States encourages its citizens to lobby for these kinds of changes. This "citizen lobbying" is especially important when Congress is not working together.

For example, after the stock market crash of 1929, Congress passed the Securities and Exchange Act of 1934. This was a law that intended to control securities fraud and insider trading. But the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) still has its own regulations on how to enforce the law. So, while the law on securities fraud

¹ Scott, "Meet the Press"

has remained constant, the regulations on responding to insider trading have changed.

The same is true about immigration. Immigration laws are already in place. The laws can remain the same—we should instead focus our attention on new regulations to enforce the law. That is where we can make a direct and immediate impact. We can do this by petitioning the appropriate government agencies for new regulations. They will determine how immigration laws are being enforced.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REASONABLE REGULATIONS

We want to have new immigration rules that make sense for all Americans. The American political system allows and encourages citizens to get involved. We can all affect change in immigration policy by making our voice heard through the petitioning process.

This process begins with getting our proposed rules on the agenda of regulation committees at each agency. A new rule or regulation must go before an authorized committee at the respective government agency. This is different than a new law, which needs a legislative sponsor in Congress. We will talk about how to get a new regulation implemented later in the book.

We will petition the US Department of State and US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in Washington, DC. These are the two US government agencies most involved in the immigration process. The Department of State administers laws and implements policies related to visa services. USCIS administers the naturalization process to obtaining citizenship and also works on immigration.

Petitioning for new regulations requires effort—we must first understand the current policy, identify the gaps within it, and propose recommendations/regulations to fix those gaps. That is where this book comes in.

The world of immigration is complicated and intimidating. Reading text on immigration law is like reading a foreign language. Also, the majority of people talking about immigration are doing so in a partisan manner. In doing so, they are using the immigration debate to push an agenda. This makes understanding the facts of the immigration process difficult.

But I will simplify this for you. I will use my family's immigration story to illustrate how some people come to America. I will use my diplomatic experience with the US government to explain immigration policies. While I have my own political views, they will not be a part of this book.

This book will be a nonpartisan tool for you to understand how people come to America and how this process can be improved. We will discuss birthright citizenship, immigrant visas, fiancé visas, diversity visas, and green cards. In each of these areas you will learn the following:

1. How people legally come to America. We are bombarded with information about illegal immigration. But the majority of immigrants, over a million people, actually legally immigrate to America each year. I will use stories of how members of my own family came, and are still coming, to America. For those of you who do not know any families who recently immigrated, I invite you to get to know mine—we may be a little loud, but we are lovable. You can see some of the family members I am talking about in the family tree.
2. Gaps that exist in our current immigration policies. These gaps are to the disadvantage of the American people. We will need to discuss immigration laws and requirements in order to explore these gaps. However, I'm sure that you would prefer a root canal than to read about immigration law. To make this more manageable, I will use examples from my time as a consular officer. I will also use the “Consul’s Corner” to summarize the laws we are discussing. You can refer to the “Consul’s Corner” to find resources provided by the US Immigration and Nationality Act

(INA), US Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the US Department of State.

3. Proposals for new regulations to eliminate gaps in our immigration policy. The new rules presented will strengthen our legal immigration process in a way that benefits all Americans. They are a reasonable common ground in the immigration policy debate. The proposals culminate in a pro-American immigration plan.

I promise that, by the end of this book, you will have the confidence and knowledge to engage in the immigration debate. If you agree with pro-American immigration, I will ask you to be a part of our call for new regulations. If you disagree with some of the recommendations, I hope you will take action on the areas where you do agree. Together we can make our voices heard for a more pro-American immigration.