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Immigration reforms split U.S Senate candidates

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The four declared candidates in the race for the Massachusetts U.S. Senate seat now occupied by Scott Brown all stress the importance of reforming immigration policy.

But their proposals range from Brown's strict anti-illegal immigration stance to policies that would create opportunities for the undocumented to become legal.

About 11 million illegal immigrants were living in the United States in 2010, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The agency deported 396,906 individuals in 2011, and almost 55 percent of them, or 216,698, had been convicted of felonies or misdemeanors, according to ICE.

ICE has been rolling out the Secure Communities program that allows ICE agents to share the fingerprint database used by the FBI and local and state police, ICE Public Affairs Officer Harold Ort said. Secure Communities is already being used in 30 states, though Massachusetts is not one of them.

But many of the state's police chiefs, including Yarmouth Police Chief Frank Frederickson, support the program.

"The more information we share, the better," he said. "If this tool helps us to share important information that removes criminals more quickly, then I'm all for it."

Brown has taken a tough stance against illegal immigration, strongly supporting Secure Communities.

In the wake of a Feb. 18 Milford stabbing involving an illegal immigrant, Brown released a statement calling for immigration reform.

"This latest incident is proof that we need to do more to enforce our immigration laws," he said. "It's time we applied some common sense before more people are hurt or killed."

In 2010, he opposed the federal Dream Act, which would give illegal immigrants a pathway to citizenship through college or military service. He called the Dream Act a source of "amnesty" for immigrants who are here illegally.

When asked about her stance on immigration, Democratic candidate Elizabeth Warren said she supports protecting communities by punishing violent criminal immigrants.

"A program that targets violent and dangerous offenders while taking the legitimate concerns of law enforcement into account can be implemented effectively," she said in a statement.

Warren said the FBI and ICE should share information to keep violent offenders off the street, but she also expressed concern about unintentional effects the Secure Communities program might have.

"I support measures that will take dangerous criminals off our streets and ensure safer communities. I want to make sure our current laws do that and don't erect barriers between police and communities that make it harder for them to work together," Warren said.

She declined to comment further.

Jim King, a Boston-based lawyer, is one of two other Democrats in the race, hoping to win the primary on Sept. 18.

King supports immigration legislation that creates opportunities for undocumented immigrants. He believes the Dream Act is a good place to start changing immigration law, he said.

"We should not try to just deport the people that are here, except in extreme cases," King said. "We should give them the opportunity to work, to make it to citizenship."

King said an undocumented person living in the United States should be punished for breaking the law, but should also be shown the process to become a legal citizen.

"We teach best by example as a country. The example is you get punished when you violate the law, but the punishment is consistent with the violation, and we'll give you a chance," he said.

Like King, Marisa DeFranco a Democrat from Middleton, supports options for undocumented immigrants to become legal.

DeFranco has worked as an immigration attorney for 17 years. DeFranco said her experience working with immigrants, and being immersed in the issue, has helped shape her ideas for change.

If elected, she plans to push immigration reforms that would allow undocumented immigrants to pay a \$4,000 fee,

apply for citizenship and work in the United States while waiting to be granted citizenship.

"There are a lot of people who just want the opportunity and they'll pay that," DeFranco said.

The fee, however, has been criticized by some immigration groups.

But DeFranco said she would extend the waiting period for immigrants with green cards to get citizenship from the current five years to seven.

"I'm willing to consider extending (the naturalization process) to give recognition that they came through another path," DeFranco said.

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The kind of draconian measures advocated by Baja Rat are impractical and inhumane. There are estimated to be 11 million illegal aliens in our country and rounding up such a large number as suggested could be done but it would be an enormous effort and it would take years. A much more efficient way to protect american workers is by the "self deportation" policies advocated by Gov. Romney and Sen Brown. Essentially this approach recognizes that most illegals come here to make money and achieve a better lifestyle. Hence if we "follow the money" and cut off these benefits, then they will have no reason to stay and they will leave by the same way they came. The main mechanism for forcing self deportation works by focusing our primary enforcement efforts on the employers who hire and exploit illegals rather than on the illegals themselves. These employers would be required to do careful checks on the immigration status of anyone they hired illegals anyhow then they would be fined or sent to prison. This simple change in our law, instituting mandatory e-verify, would make it very difficult for illegals to find work except in criminal enterprises. The Republican plan also envisions measures designed to make life more difficult for illegal workers to live in the united states. There would be better checks to make sure they could never get benefits like drivers licenses, public housing and subsidized medical care. In the republican plan the illegals themselves would largely be left alone unless they made a nuisance of themselves to their neighbors or if they ran into some sort of problem with the law. By focusing resources in the focused fashion we can correct the issue of illegal immigration simply by using the natural market forces without cruel and draconian measures.

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Baja Rat

Illegal aliens are criminals and parasites, one and all. Practically everything they do on U.S. soil is illegal. They need to be ferreted out, rounded up like cattle, punished for their numerous crimes, then booted back to whence they snuck in from with such extreme prejudice that they will never, ever think of violating our sovereignty again. Build a wall and deport 'em all. Enough is enough.

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