

A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR US ALL

The Sierra Club strongly supports a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Like many great Americans, Sierra Club founder John Muir was an immigrant. It's only because the Scottish-born [environmentalist visionary](#), who arrived in the United States at the age of 11 after a six-week sea voyage from Glasgow, was able to take advantage of the opportunities in his adopted country that the Sierra Club exists at all.

Today, however, the nation's immigration system is broken. Nearly 165 years after Muir's arrival on our shores, we're forcing approximately 11 million people to live in the shadows.

Many of these undocumented people work in the fields, mop floors, care for other people's children, and take low-wage jobs to support their families. Many suffer from workplace exposure to dangerous chemicals and pesticides, and many more live in areas with perilous levels of toxic air and water pollution.



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The 20 million Americans with family members whose legal statuses are in limbo share the Sierra Club's concerns about climate and the environment. For example, our own polls indicate that [Latinos support environmental and conservation efforts](#) with even greater intensity than the average American: 90 percent of Latino voters favor clean energy over fossil fuels. A California study found that [74 percent of Asian-Americans](#), the fastest growing group in America, accept climate science. Yet, a significant number of these stakeholders and change agents have been denied their civil rights in the public arena.

The Sierra Club is committed to partnering with *all* who share our urgent concerns about the futures of our families and our climate. It is time for us to work together.

With more than 1.3 million members, the Sierra Club is the longest-running, largest, and most influential grassroots environmental group in the United States. Our organization has thrived because of the ability of our members to fully engage in our democracy. Right now, there are 11 million people who lack this ability. They can't seek a better life for their families or engage in the public process without fear. Nobody should have to live under those circumstances.

That's why the Sierra Club's board of directors has voted to offer our organization's strong support for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. This pathway should be free of unreasonable barriers. And it must strive to keep families together and reunite families that have been split apart.

For the Sierra Club and the environmental movement to protect our wild America, defend clean air and water, and win the fight against climate disruption, we must ensure that the people who are the most disenfranchised and the most harmed by pollution have the voice to fight polluters and advocate for climate solutions without fear.

This isn't the first time that the Sierra Club has taken a stand on a critical issue that might strike many as outside our purview. In 1993, the Club opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement. This position was controversial at the time, but has since proven to be the right choice. We didn't think it would be good for workers or the environment, and it hasn't been. In fact, NAFTA turned out to be a major driver of undocumented immigration into the United States from Mexico and Central America.

More recently, the Club has challenged the [Real ID Act](#). This measure allows the Department of Homeland Security to waive 36 federal laws — including the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Wilderness Act. That ill-conceived suspension of bedrock environmental laws has been used to construct border walls in the Southwest with little regard to their effect on wildlife and habitats nor their cost in human lives.

We can't solve either the climate crisis or our broken immigration system by acting out of fear or by supporting exclusion. One of our nation's greatest strengths is the contribution that generations of immigrants have made to our national character.

If we're serious about solving the climate crisis and protecting our democracy, then we must work with the hardworking men and women who want to play by the rules and play a part in building a healthy, safe, and prosperous future for our country.