

Milli Atkinson : Immigration Attorney for CALI

Milli Atkinson of Centro de Ayuda Legal para Inmigrantes (CALI) from Natalie Rodriguez on Vimeo.

Milli Atkinson is an [Immigration Attorney](#) for the *Centro de Ayuda Legal para Inmigrantes*, [CALI](#), who believes that although the proposed immigration reform [S. 744](#) is not perfect, it is a start to give undocumented immigrants an option to legalize their status in the United States. To her, the idea of having an open border is unrealistic, yet she believes that “we created a system that businesses welcome [undocumented immigrants] and then the government turns a blind eye, and then we’ve kind of created our own problems.”

Through her career as an immigration lawyer Atkinson has been able to reunite families who had not seen each other in up to ten years as well as work in removal defense. Through Governor Jerry Brown’s recent signing of [AB 60](#) and the [Trust Act](#) in California, she believes that undocumented immigrants will be more willing to collaborate with law enforcement when they are victims of crimes and be less likely to become involved in deportation procedures. According to Atkinson, “a lot of people got caught up in the deportation process just for stupid things and some times even when they weren’t charged with anything.” Being able to drive legally in the state will change that for some of the more than two million [undocumented immigrants in California](#).

Atkinson obtained her Bachelor of Science degree from [Pepperdine University](#) in accounting in the year 2000. In 2003 she obtained her Juris Doctor degree from the University of California, [Hastings College of the Law](#). In 2009 she began practicing full time immigration law through a private practice. Four years later, in February of 2013 she became CALI's lead attorney.

Before becoming a full time immigration lawyer Atkinson was working in finance and volunteering and interning part time in immigration law. She interned at the [International Rescue Committee](#) and the [Office of Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi](#).

It was learning about human trafficking and international human rights that led to her interest in immigration law. While interning at non-profits, she learned about [U-Visas](#), which are specifically for victims of human trafficking and other crimes. She found immigration law to be rewarding and personal. "You kind of get involved in someone's entire family and their life history, in their story in a way that other areas of the law is not." Originally, Atkinson wanted to be a tax accountant.

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