



March 25, 2025

Testimony Before the
U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

Ammon S. Blair, Senior Fellow

Dear Chairman Guest, Ranking Member Correa, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to testify before you.

My name is Ammon Blair, and I am a Senior Fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. I bring 22 years of military service and extensive border security experience through my time in the U.S. Army and U.S. Border Patrol.

I have witnessed firsthand the consequences of failed federal policy and how the Biden administration deliberately dismantled the legal, structural, and operational defenses necessary to secure our sovereignty and protect our citizens.

Texas and other border states have long faced persistent security threats emanating from the southern border—including illegal immigration, human and drug smuggling, insurgent activity, and foreign terrorist infiltration—often with minimal federal support ([McCaffrey & Scales, 2011](#)). However, under the Biden administration, these threats intensified dramatically, culminating in a full-scale security crisis that demanded immediate and decisive action.

President Biden's policies—including facilitating the invasion, releasing millions of illegal aliens into the interior, the halting of critical border security infrastructure projects, the dismantling of both border and interior enforcement mechanisms, and the refusal to confront the threat posed by cartel-controlled Mexico—directly fueled the collapse of law and order along our border ([House Judiciary Committee, 2024](#)). In doing so, the Biden administration ceded operational control of U.S. territory to foreign terrorist organizations ([Allen, 2023](#); [Office of the Texas Governor, 2023](#)).

The Mexican State–Cartel Alliance: A Hostile Bilateral Reality

Mexico is not a distant concern—it is the most strategically consequential nation to U.S. homeland security, and yet it remains one of the most underestimated and politically ignored threats in the American national security apparatus. While our defense establishment focused on the borders and sovereignty of foreign nations across the globe,

Mexico devolved into a narco-insurgent state on our doorstep—exporting violence, criminal governance, and destabilization directly into U.S. territory.

Yet despite the clear and expanding threat, the Biden Administration ignored Mexico as a national security priority, treating the crisis as a humanitarian management challenge rather than the gray zone conflict it has become. This deliberate misframing paralyzed the federal response and allowed Mexico to become a sanctuary state for enemies of the United States ([Fernández, 2024](#)).

Mexico today is more accurately described as a state where federal, state and local governance has collapsed in key regions and foreign terrorist organizations dominate political and economic life, much like Afghanistan ([Kaminski, 2024](#)). These cartels function as hybrid threats, closely resembling their Middle Eastern counterparts, they employ terror as a political weapon, control territory, corrupt or co-opt institutions, and use violence strategically to shape governance outcomes ([Maya, 2021](#)). Their war is not against a rival state—it is against the very concept of law, sovereignty, and national borders.

Therefore, the security environment along the U.S.–Mexico border cannot be understood through the outdated framework of narco-criminality alone. What exists is an intolerable strategic alliance between the Mexican state, at the national and sub-national level, and the cartels—a relationship that has evolved into a coordinated, ideologically aligned partnership with direct consequences for U.S. national security ([Treviño, 2025a](#)).

As President Trump declared on February 1, 2025, *“The Mexican DTOs have an intolerable alliance with the government of Mexico. This alliance endangers the national security of the United States, and we must eradicate the influence of these dangerous cartels from the bilateral environment”* ([White House, 2025](#)).

This was not political rhetoric—it was a necessary recognition of a hostile, coordinated, and ideologically aligned threat. Mexican cartel organizations, including the Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG, now operate in at least 65 countries, rivaling foreign terrorist organizations in reach, capability, and lethality ([Fitzgerald, 2025](#)). These networks are not merely trafficking narcotics—they are engaged in narcoterrorism, human trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, and political subversion. In many areas, they out-govern the Mexican state, exercising de facto control and offering services the government no longer can—or will ([Georgetown Americas Institute, 2024](#)).

As Texas Public Policy Foundation’s Josh Treviño warns:

“The Mexican state is now essentially a single-party, left-populist regime, aligned ideologically and operationally with comparable regimes in Cuba and Venezuela. Like those regimes, it regards its nation’s trafficking cartels as vehicles for profit and control and also agents of national policy abroad — especially but not only in the United States.” ([Treviño, 2025b](#)).

The alliance between the Mexican government and the Mexican cartels is no longer speculative—it is openly acknowledged by leading policy experts and institutions ([Golden, 2024](#)). As the Conservative U.S.-Mexico Policy Coalition declares unequivocally that, “The Mexican government is not an ally to the United States, and can no longer properly be described as a partner” ([Conservative U.S.-Mexico Policy Coalition, 2023, p. 1](#)).

The Coalition further warns that, “The Mexican government and Mexican criminal cartels exist in conscious and willing symbiosis, at multiple levels, up to and including the Mexican presidency,” and that Mexico is now “a willing partner in a regional authoritarian leftist alliance that is fundamentally anti-American, actively interventionist, and increasingly an arena and base for hostile powers from outside the Western Hemisphere” ([Conservative U.S.-Mexico Policy Coalition, 2023, p. 1](#)).

The Biden Administration’s failure to acknowledge or confront Mexico’s authoritarian backsliding has effectively greenlit a regime that tolerates narco-terrorism as a cost of doing business. By continuing to treat Mexico as a diplomatic peer rather than a strategic liability, the Biden administration insulated a failing state from accountability while exposing American communities to escalating violence.

In national security terms, democratic collapse in a neighboring state is not a foreign policy concern—it is a homeland security emergency. The United States cannot afford to ignore the consequences of political decay when it fuels the operational capabilities of cartels that already control swaths of American U.S. territory along the southern border.

U.S.-Mexico Border

In May 2019, the Mexican investigative journal *Contralínea* published a leaked map from President Andrés Manuel López Obrador’s (AMLO) administration showing that over 80% of Mexico’s population centers prioritized for enforcement were either controlled (57.5%) or contested (23.3%) by Mexican cartels. Only 19.9% of those areas were under undisputed government control. The report, citing internal Mexican government data, exposed the ground truth: the Mexican state had effectively lost governance over nearly all key urban corridors, particularly those along the U.S. border ([Horowitz, 2019](#)).

This loss of territorial control does not stop at Mexico’s border. The same cartel networks that dominate key Mexican population centers have projected their power into Texas and other U.S. states, exploiting the permissive environment created by both federal inaction and fragmented state-level coordination. What began as cross-border trafficking has evolved into a full-spectrum, multi-domain campaign, establishing operational control over critical areas within the United States itself.

Mexican cartels have systematically established operational control along the U.S. side of the border, employing sophisticated gray zone activities that remain below the threshold of

conventional armed conflict ([Luna, 2024](#); [House Committee on Homeland Security, 2023](#)). Their operations now extend across multiple domains—land, air, maritime, subterranean, cyber, and the electromagnetic spectrum—enabling them to conduct surveillance, communication disruption, and logistical coordination with precision and impunity ([Sanchez, 2025](#); [Hackers Arise, 2025](#); [Paz, 2024](#)).

This multi-domain dominance has allowed cartels to seize and maintain operational control over territory in Texas and other border states, creating corridors of strategic access that allow the unimpeded movement of people, narcotics, weapons, and information deep into the interior of the United States. ([McCaffrey & Scales, 2011, pp. 8-9, 17](#); [Allen, 2023](#)). What began as a smuggling operation has evolved into a functioning logistical architecture—a transnational ‘silk road’ that is now the cartels’ most valuable asset. It is this infrastructure of access and movement that adversarial nations and foreign terrorist organizations increasingly exploit ([Warren, 2019](#)).

Through deliberate infiltration of every major city and many suburban and rural areas, cartels have constructed a logistical supply chain or ‘pipeline’ that provides our adversaries - from adversarial Nations like the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) to foreign terrorist organizations - with direct pathways into the heart of our society ([House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, 2024, pp. 59-61](#)). Their ability to simultaneously employ political corruption, economic coercion, social, and information warfare methods has transformed the border states into critical terrain and operational ground zero for hostile state and non-state actors seeking to exploit these established networks of access ([McCaffrey & Scales, 2011, pp. 9, 18](#); [Maya, 2021](#)).

Weaponized Mass Migration

This vast and deeply embedded logistics infrastructure has not only enabled the movement of illicit goods and narcotics—it has also set the stage for a more insidious tactic of hybrid warfare: mass migration as a weapon. With the supply chain and access networks already in place, hostile state and non-state actors have shifted strategies to exploit humanitarian channels, using population flows to overwhelm American institutions, dilute law enforcement effectiveness, and penetrate communities under the guise of asylum or refugee resettlement. This evolution represents a strategic escalation—from trafficking and infiltration to full-spectrum demographic destabilization—coordinated, funded, and executed with the tacit consent of a complicit federal apparatus.

Over the last four years, the United States has endured a deliberately orchestrated invasion through weaponized mass migration. Millions of illegal aliens from over 170 countries have been funneled—often with cartel facilitation—into Texas and other border states, overwhelming state and local resources ([Humire, 2025](#); [Sanchez, 2024](#)).

These mass population movements were not merely tolerated by the prior federal administration—they were facilitated. Federal agencies and NGOs were repurposed to serve an ideological agenda of “safe, orderly, and humane migration,” creating an extralegal immigration regime in violation of longstanding federal law ([Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, 2024](#); [Bensman, 2024](#)).

This has not only compromised public safety but created systemic national security vulnerabilities by serving as a force multiplier for hostile state and non-state actors. The sheer scale of these movements overwhelmed federal, state, and local law enforcement resources, degrading operational effectiveness and diverting attention away from known threats.

Simultaneously, these mass migrations provided concealment and cover for infiltration by foreign intelligence operatives (CCP), cartel enforcers, and members of transnational criminal and terrorist organizations—including MS-13, Tren de Aragua, and other violent networks with direct ties to adversarial regimes. The precise whereabouts and identities of many of these illegal entrants remain unknown, creating blind spots in national security coverage and opening the door to catastrophic risk across American communities ([Exec. Order No. 14165, 2025](#)).

This weaponized migration strategy has imposed billions of dollars in financial burdens at the federal, state, and local levels, while simultaneously enabling hostile state and non-state actors to establish operational footholds deep within Texas territory, like Colony ridge ([Lindquist, 2025](#); [Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2023](#)). These movements are not organic or accidental; they are deliberate in design and execution, forming the backbone of a modern form of hybrid warfare—one that weaponizes civilians to overwhelm infrastructure, erode public trust, and create opportunities for adversarial penetration ([Łubiński, 2022](#); [North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2024](#)).

In recognition of this existential threat, officials in nearly 100 Texas counties have issued disaster declarations or formally declared an invasion ([Blankley, 2024](#)). The sheer scale, coordination, and sustained impact of this crisis have transformed every county in Texas and the U.S. into a de facto border county, subject to the cascading effects of federal failure and adversarial exploitation.

The Consequences of Federal Abdication and the Imperative of State Action

The evidence is overwhelming. The United States is under an invasion—not by a conventional army, but by a networked system of foreign terrorist organizations, corrupt political actors, and hostile state actors. These adversaries exploit gaps in our legal framework and operate with impunity in the gray zones created by deliberate federal inaction.

This is not a just border crisis—it is a full-spectrum national security failure, manufactured by the Biden Administration through the active subversion of U.S. immigration law, the construction of an illegal parallel immigration regime, and the forcible repurposing of our homeland security apparatus to serve foreign nationals rather than the American people.

Federal agencies once tasked with homeland security were repurposed into logistical arms for mass migration, tasked with processing and releasing millions of unvetted foreign nationals into U.S. communities. At the same time, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), funded by federal grants, have become the ground logistics network—transporting, housing, and resettling illegal aliens with no accountability ([Vaughan, 2024](#)).

The United States now faces the most sophisticated gray zone infiltration campaign in the Western Hemisphere. This is not bureaucratic incompetence—it is calculated policy.

The result has been catastrophic: strategic infiltration by hostile state and non-state actors, collapse of strategic deterrence, cartel territorial expansion inside U.S. borders, and a national posture of surrender disguised as humanitarianism.

The Biden administration did not merely abdicate its constitutional responsibilities—it actively realigned its mission away from defending American sovereignty. As a result, Texas and other border states were forced to shoulder the consequences of this betrayal. The burden of homeland defense shifted—not by choice, but by necessity—to the states and the citizens themselves.

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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement
“Part 1: Consequences of Failure: How Biden's Policies Fueled the Border Crisis”

March 25, 2025

Testimony of Aaron Reichlin-Melnick
Senior Fellow
American Immigration Council

Chairman Guest, Ranking Member Correa, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, and I currently serve as a Senior Fellow at the American Immigration Council, a non-profit organization that envisions a nation where immigrants are embraced, communities are enriched, and justice prevails for all. We strive to create a society that values immigrants as vital contributors and where everyone is afforded an equal opportunity to thrive socially, economically, and culturally. We do this by shaping immigration policies and practices at the federal, state, and local levels through educating decisionmakers and the public and advancing sensible policy solutions through research and advocacy.

The Council has long studied border policy and immigration enforcement within the United States. In 2023, we published *Beyond a Border Solution*, a report calling for greater investment in the immigration adjudication system and for border enforcement, as well as legal changes to create a more functional humanitarian protection system.¹

There is no doubt that President Biden’s record at the border was mixed. As the Council made clear over the last four years, President Biden made measurable progress at restoring the asylum system and offering safe and legal alternate pathways, while failing to respond to the urgent need to address the overwhelmed adjudication system or take a leading role in coordinating a national response to the arrival of large numbers of migrants seeking asylum or a better life in the United States. While Congress eventually provided some support to local communities, the administration’s response was delayed. The administration eventually settled on a strategy in late 2023 and border encounters plummeted throughout 2024. The “carrot and stick” approach remained in significant tension with the law, permitting some individuals to access protections while forcing others to wait indefinitely outside the country in Mexico. While this fragile state of affairs effectively reduced irregular crossings from their peaks in December 2023, its legality was questionable and ultimately it was in many ways too little, too late.

However, much has changed since 2024. On January 20, 2025, President Trump took office for a second time. As in his first term, he has set about radically reshaping immigration law and policy. President

¹ American Immigration Council, “Beyond a Border Solution,” May 3, 2023, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/beyond-border-solutions>.

Trump campaigned on “mass deportations” and after taking office he’s set out to make deportation and immigration enforcement the number one priority of the federal government.

Throughout the federal government, the Trump administration has moved to shift nearly all federal law enforcement agencies to focus on interior enforcement; the “mass deportations” he promised on the campaign trail. Rather than focus primarily on the border, recent entrants, or even those with criminal records, the Trump administration’s shotgun approach to enforcement is simultaneously targeting longtime residents,² those with no criminal records,³ undocumented families,⁴ migrant children,⁵ undocumented workers,⁶ and random people with the misfortune to be caught standing near an ICE operation.⁷ These indiscriminate and scattershot efforts to ramp up arrests with no emphasis on targeting public safety threats are indicative of an administration aiming to carry out as many arrests and deportations as they can, with little care as to whom they round up and what the impact will be on the rest of the country.

These efforts to carry out mass deportations are making Americans less safe and less well off. Law enforcement officers across the federal government have been taken off their normal duties and forced to carry out immigration arrests. Trust between immigrant communities and local police is being undermined as the administration moves to pressure local communities to end policies which promote cooperation with police. A climate of fear has descended across the country, with some immigrants with deep ties to this country staying home, skipping work and school, and only venturing outside when strictly necessary.⁸ Should deportations ramp up further, the economic impact of this change will only get worse, and all Americans can expect to feel the pinch.⁹

This administration’s priorities are backwards. At the same time as his administration is slashing government services for Americans across the board, President Trump is pouring resources into immigration enforcement. Billions of dollars are going to detaining ever-greater numbers of immigrants in

² Josh DuBose, “California couple deported after living in U.S. for 35 years,” *KTLA*, March 19, 2025, <https://ktla.com/news/local-news/southern-california-couple-in-u-s-for-35-years-deported-to-colombia/>; Theara Coleman, “Jeanette Vizguerra: a high-profile activist and the latest casualty of the immigration crackdown,” *Yahoo News*, March 20, 2025, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/jeanette-vizguerra-high-profile-activist-170455405.html>.

³ Laura Strickler, “New Immigration and Customs Enforcement data shows administration isn’t just arresting criminals,” *NBC News*, February 19, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/new-ice-data-shows-administration-isnt-just-arresting-criminals-rcna192656>.

⁴ Jennie Taer, “ICE will now target illegal migrant families for deportation — and is reopening 2 detention centers to hold them,” *New York Post*, March 6, 2025, <https://nypost.com/2025/03/06/us-news/trump-admin-will-now-target-illegal-migrant-families-for-deportation/>.

⁵ Marisa Taylor, Ted Hesson and Kristina Cooke, “Trump officials launch ICE effort to deport unaccompanied migrant children,” *Reuters*, February 23, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-directs-ice-agents-find-deport-unaccompanied-migrant-2025-02-23/>,

⁶ Ximena Bustillo, “In child care centers and on farms, businesses are bracing for more immigration raids,” *NPR*, February 28, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/28/g-s1-50958/business-workplace-raids-immigration-ice-deportation>.

⁷ Associated Press, “Ice violated Chicago agreement during immigration raids, activists allege,” March 17, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/17/chicago-ice-raids>.

⁸ Rebecca Davis O’Brien and Miriam Jordan, “A Chill Sets In for Undocumented Workers, and Those Who Hire Them,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/09/business/economy/immigrant-workers-deportation-fears.html>.

⁹ American Immigration Council, “Mass Deportation: Devastating Costs to America, Its Budget and Economy,” October 2, 2024, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/mass-deportation>.

overcrowded ICE detention beds and holding cells.¹⁰ At the same time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is terminating contracts to ensure America’s children have access to fresh, local food in our schools¹¹ and the National Institutes for Health are terminating grants to provide cancer care in rural areas.¹²

The Trump administration’s cuts also extend to core oversight of their actions. On Friday, March 21, the Department of Homeland Security effectively dissolved three oversight bodies created by Congress within the Department of Homeland Security; the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, and the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.¹³ The latter agency was tasked with reviewing claims under the Prison Rape Elimination Act brought by people in ICE detention.

Abolishing CRCL will cause investigations into serious allegations of rape and sexual violence inside ICE detention centers to be dropped or to languish with no forward progress, allowing perpetrators to escape responsibility. And this is not even the first time the Trump administration has openly ignored sexual violence against migrants. In March the Trump administration dropped a lawsuit seeking compensation for migrant children raped and sexually abused while held in shelters. Displaying a shocking level of callousness, the government argued in a legal brief that dropping the case was necessary because compensating children who had been raped and sexually abused while in government-funded shelters could “incentivize illegal crossings at the southern border.”¹⁴ None of this makes our communities safer.

Rather than pour ever-greater sums of money into immigration enforcement while cutting services for Americans and gutting basic protections and oversight for those held in immigration custody, this administration and Congress should pursue common-sense policies that help our communities. A path to permanent legal status for the overwhelming majority of undocumented immigrants who have resided in this country for decades without getting into trouble with the law would build American prosperity, encourage the rule of law, and reduce exploitation of vulnerable immigrants by unscrupulous employers. In an option between self-defeating mass deportations and a prosperity-building path to legal status, the choice is clear.

President Trump’s Obsession With Draconian Immigration Enforcement Is Making Us Less Safe

The Trump administration has chosen to prioritize immigration enforcement above nearly every other law enforcement priority; above drug trafficking, above terrorism, and above protecting our children.

The first shift began at the Department of Justice. On President Trump’s first full day in office, the Department of Justice issued a memo declaring that all U.S. Attorneys offices “shall pursue charges

¹⁰ Dennis Valera, “Immigrant advocates protest inhumane conditions in Baltimore ICE detention facility,” *CBS News*, March 18, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/maryland-immigration-ice-detention-facility-conditions/>.

¹¹ Aimee Picchi, “USDA cancels \$1 billion in funding for schools and food banks to buy food from local suppliers,” *CBS News*, March 13, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/usda-cancels-local-food-purchasing-food-banks-school-meals/>.

¹² Lauren Neergaard and Kasturi Pananjady, “NIH research cuts threaten the search for life-saving cures and jobs in every state,” March 6, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-science-medicine-research-cancer-funding-university-0ef3fa47694784e47b0ecd51680410ba>.

¹³ Zolan Kanno-Youngs, Hamed Aleaziz, Adam Goldman, and Eileen Sullivan, “Trump Fires Nearly the Entire Civil Rights Branch of D.H.S.,” *New York Times*, March 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/21/us/politics/trump-civil-rights-homeland-security-deportations.html>.

¹⁴ Justin Wise and Suzanne Monyak, “US Said to Drop Sex Abuse Lawsuit Against Migrant Child Shelter,” *Bloomberg*, March 9, 2025, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/us-said-to-drop-sex-abuse-lawsuit-against-migrant-child-shelter>.

relating to criminal immigration-related violations” whenever presented, no matter how minor.¹⁵ Any failure to pursue such charges requires a formal declination decision and has to be immediately reported to senior leadership for review.¹⁶

Although federal law enforcement was already focused on serious matters, the memo directed multiple law enforcement agencies to abandon their current duties and shift to focusing on immigration-related offenses again. The memo directed the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (established in 1982 to identify, disrupt, and dismantle drug trafficking and related offenses) and Project Safe Neighborhoods (established in 2001 to bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement to address violent crime) to divert “resources and attention to immigration-related prosecutions at the federal, state, and local levels.”¹⁷ Taking this one step further, the memo provides that “OCDETF Strike Forces shall prioritize the investigation and prosecution of immigration offenses, including by requiring OCDETF-funded AUSAs to devote significant time and attention to the investigation of these crimes.”¹⁸ In other words, the DOJ directs its components to *stop* focusing on drug trafficking and transnational crime and instead mandates that law enforcement *must* focus on immigration offenses.

This mandate is not new under President Trump. In his first term, Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ 2018 “Zero Tolerance” policy mandated that prosecutors charge every migrant crossing the southern border under 8 U.S.C. § 1325 for misdemeanor “improper entry.” This not only led to cruel family separations that a majority of Americans opposed, but it also meant prosecutors at the southern border were forced to divert attention away from serious criminals, which led prosecutions for drug trafficking to plummet.¹⁹ While it is too early to have any hard data for this renewed shift in prosecutorial priorities, expect something similar to occur in 2025. Prosecutors have limited resources, and if they are mandated to use those resources on immigration charges, they will by necessity be forced to stop bringing charges against other federal crimes.

After taking office, Attorney General Pam Bondi emphasized in a February 5, 2025 memorandum that the highest priority of the Department of Justice will be “immigration enforcement.”²⁰ Incredibly, the *only* priorities for the entire DOJ that AG Bondi lists in her memorandum are immigration enforcement (including investigations of local officials who do not cooperate with ICE), combatting trafficking and smuggling of children across the border, crimes against law enforcement, and targeting transnational criminal organizations such as MS-13. Not a single other crime rises to the level of a priority for the department — not terrorism, child sexual exploitation, public corruption, gang violence, election interference, *or even fentanyl trafficking*.

¹⁵ Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove, “Memorandum for All Department Employees: Interim Policy Changes Regarding Charging, Sentencing, and Immigration Enforcement,” Dep’t of Justice, January 21, 2025, [available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/documents/2f9af176-72c5-458a-adc4-91327aa80d11.pdf?itid=hp-top-table-high_p001_f002](https://www.washingtonpost.com/documents/2f9af176-72c5-458a-adc4-91327aa80d11.pdf?itid=hp-top-table-high_p001_f002).

¹⁶ Id. at 2.

¹⁷ Id. at 3.

¹⁸ Id. at 3.

¹⁹ Brad Heath, “As feds focused on detaining kids, border drug prosecutions plummeted,” *USA Today*, October 10, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2018/10/10/border-drug-trafficking-prosecutions-plunged-zero-tolerance/1521128002/>.

²⁰ Attorney General Pamela Bondi, Memorandum for All Department Employees: General Policy Regarding Charging, Plea Negotiations, and Sentencing,” February 5, 2025, <https://www.justice.gov/ag/media/1388541/dl>.

The diversion of law enforcement away from their normal duties has occurred throughout the federal government since Trump took office, not just among prosecutors. For example, ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the criminal investigative arm of ICE, previously had its primary mission "keeping dangerous drugs and gang members off our streets" and "identifying and supporting victims rescued from child exploitation, human trafficking, and forced labor."²¹ Not so anymore. Now, pursuant to a January 20 executive order, the president has mandated that the "primary mission of [HSI] is the enforcement of the provisions of the INA and other federal laws related to illegal entry and unlawful presence of aliens in the United States."²²

Rather than protecting American children from pedophiles and drug traffickers, public reporting confirms that hundreds of HSI agents have been diverted to carrying out immigration enforcement instead.²³ Former HSI agents warned in February that these shifts may force agents to abandon cases involving "child exploitation crimes, cyberattacks and Dark Web financial schemes, Iranian and Chinese nuclear traffickers, Russian organized crime, trade fraud and sanctions investigations."²⁴ Now, in March, reporting from Reuters confirms the devastating impact of these cuts: "scores of agents who specialize in child sexual exploitation have been reassigned to immigration enforcement," including menial duties such as "surveillance outside of immigrant workers' homes, taking down license plates and distributing photos of 'target' immigrants to detain."²⁵

Multiple other federal law enforcement agencies are also being forced to divert large numbers of agents away from their normal law enforcement tasks to carry out immigration raids.

- The Drug Enforcement Agency has been ordered to divert agents to immigration enforcement, with one DEA Special Agent in Charge admitting that immigration enforcement duties are "new to the DEA," and that the agency has been required to send agents out to conduct immigration enforcement every day.²⁶ In total, 25 percent of DEA's entire 10,000 staff have been diverted to immigration enforcement as of late March.²⁷ Rather than tracking down drug traffickers, DEA agents are also being told to comb through old files and find any cases involving undocumented immigrants, going as far back as five years ago, even cases where prosecutors declined to bring charges because of a lack of evidence, and to go out and arrest these individuals on immigration offenses.

²¹ ICE Homeland Security Investigations, "Who We Are," *last updated* March 7, 2025, <https://www.ice.gov/about-ice/hsi>.

²² President Donald J. Trump, Executive Order 14159, Protecting the American People Against Invasion, January 20, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-02006/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion>.

²³ Josh Meyer, "Thousands of DHS agents shift to deportation instead of drugs, weapons and human trafficking," *USA Today*, February 14, 2025, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/2025/02/14/dhs-agents-deportation-not-trafficking/78641666007/>.

²⁴ *Id.* ("Cappannelli said one HSI agent involved in complex multi-agency criminal investigations is now chasing border crossers out of a remote station in Eagle Pass, Texas.")

²⁵ Brad Heath, Joshua Schneyer, Marisa Taylor, Sarah N. Lynch and Mike Spector, "Exclusive: Thousands of agents diverted to Trump immigration crackdown," *Reuters*, March 22, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/thousands-agents-diverted-trump-immigration-crackdown-2025-03-22/>.

²⁶ Shelby Bremer, "DEA special agent in charge of San Diego discusses immigration, US-Mexico border," *NBC San Diego*, March 8, 2025, <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/san-diego-dea-agent-immigration-border/3772700/>.

²⁷ Brad Heath, Joshua Schneyer, Marisa Taylor, Sarah N. Lynch and Mike Spector, "Exclusive: Thousands of agents diverted to Trump immigration crackdown," *Reuters*, March 22, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/thousands-agents-diverted-trump-immigration-crackdown-2025-03-22/>.

- The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms has also been deputized to carry out immigration enforcement. Agents have been sent to join ICE on various enforcement operations, including a controversial arrest of an adult outside a school during morning drop-off.²⁸ In total, as of late March, “about 80%” of the agency’s “roughly 2,500” agents have been reassigned to immigration enforcement and taken away from their normal job investigating firearms offenses, arson, bombing, and illicit shipments of alcohol and tobacco.²⁹
- The Internal Revenue Service has been directed to divert an unknown number of criminal investigation agents, whose expertise lies in investigating tax evaders and perpetrators of financial, to immigration enforcement.³⁰
- The U.S. Marshal Service has been directed to send agents to the southern border and to join ICE on enforcement operations in the interior.³¹

Even the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force is not immune from this shift in priorities. The January 21 memorandum provides that the Joint Terrorism Task Force must “coordinate with DHS, as well as state and local members, to assist in the execution of President Trump’s immigration-related initiatives.”³² Media has already confirmed that agents assigned to the JTTF have been taken off their normal duties and instead are “focused on making immigration arrests.”³³ In essence, rather than focus on disrupting terrorist threats, the FBI’s primary anti-terrorism task force must instead focus on finding and rounding up migrants that the Trump administration declares a higher priority.

In a world of limited resources, diverting law enforcement agents and prosecutors focusing on more serious crimes to carry out Trump’s mass deportation agenda is going to have an obvious effect. When FBI agents investigating terrorists are instead forced to round up migrants, our nation is not safer. When ICE HSI agents working to track online child pedophiles are forced instead to wait outside a random migrant’s house conducting surveillance instead, our children are not safer. When DEA agents investigating a drug ring are told to instead knock on doors to find a random migrant who missed a court hearing, our communities are not safer.

Finally, to be clear, there is no evidence that the Trump administration’s increased enforcement operations are targeting only public safety threats. Data published by ICE itself shows that the percent of people arrested by ICE and held in ICE detention with no criminal record has tripled since President Trump took office (see Figure 1).

²⁸ Becky Vevea and Mila Koumpilova, “Person Detained By ICE And ATF Agents During School Dropoff, Charter School Leaders Say,” *Block Club Chicago*, February 28, 2025, <https://blockclubchicago.org/2025/02/26/person-detained-by-federal-immigration-officials-during-school-dropoff-chicago-charter-school-administrators-say/>.

²⁹ Brad Heath, Joshua Schneyer, Marisa Taylor, Sarah N. Lynch and Mike Spector, “Exclusive: Thousands of agents diverted to Trump immigration crackdown,” *Reuters*, March 22, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/thousands-agents-diverted-trump-immigration-crackdown-2025-03-22/>.

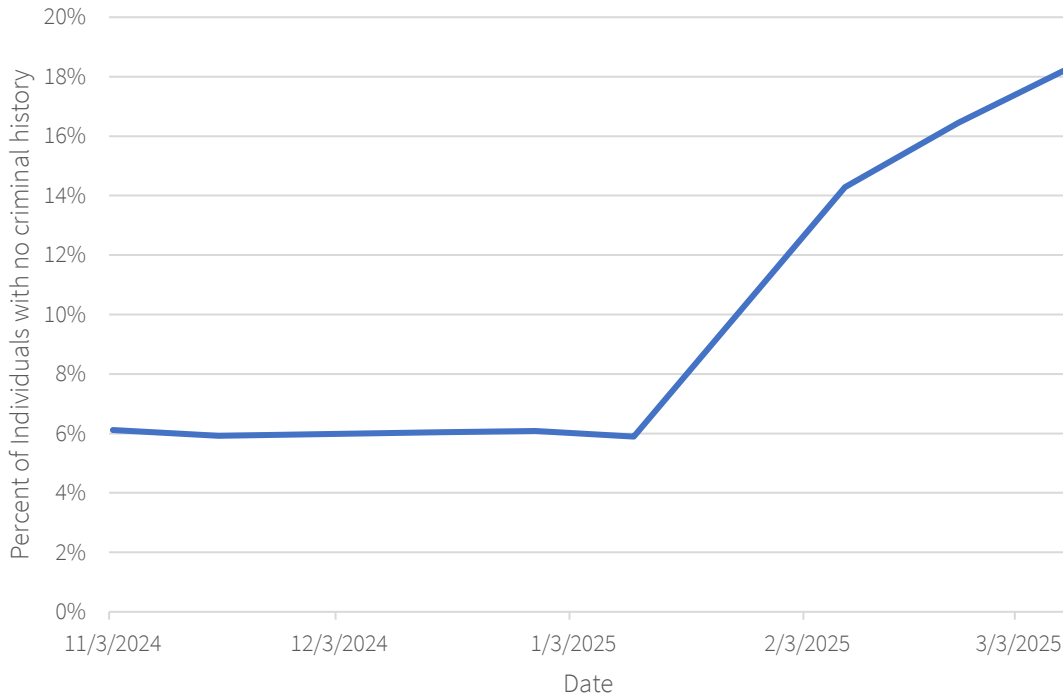
³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ Kerry Charles, U.S. Marshals visit southern border,” *MSN*, February 17, 2025, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/u-s-marshals-visit-southern-border/ar-AA1zfeNrATF>.

³² Bove Memorandum, at 3.

³³ Barb Markoff, Christine Tressel, Tom Jones, Mark Rivera, “Chicago FBI terrorism task force new objective: Immigration enforcement,” *ABC 7 Chicago*, March 6, 2025, <https://abc7chicago.com/post/chicago-fbi-terrorism-task-force-new-objective-during-president-donald-trump-administration-immigration-enforcement/15985664/>.

Figure 1: Percent of Individuals Arrested by ICE Inside the United States and Held in ICE Detention Who Have No Criminal History.



Source: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Detention Management, <https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management>.³⁴

Through the last months of the Biden administration, roughly 6 percent of people arrested by ICE inside the interior of the United States and sent to ICE detention had no criminal record, meaning 94 percent of those held in ICE detention arrested in the interior were people with either a prior criminal conviction or a pending criminal charge. As of early March, over 18 percent of individuals held in ICE detention who were arrested in the interior by ICE had no criminal record. In other words, the Trump administration’s enforcement efforts are leading to a significant increase in the arrests of people who are *not* public safety threats. And the people carrying out many of those arrests are law enforcement agents whose normal jobs would require them to target only those individuals engaged in serious violations of federal criminal laws, such as drug trafficking.

Mass Deportations Will Hurt the United States Economy and U.S. Workers

Today, there are at least 13 million undocumented people living in the United States.³⁵ President Trump promises to carry out a mass deportation campaign with the stated intent of arresting and deporting

³⁴ Detention data is posted to this site on a biweekly basis. Prior data available through the Wayback Machine at <https://web.archive.org/web/20241204112435/https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management>.

³⁵ Using American Community Survey data, we estimate that there were 10.99 million undocumented immigrants in the country as of 2022. DHS data shows that over 2.5 million people were released after crossing the southern border either at or between a port of entry since January 2023. U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec., Office of Homeland Security Statistics, “Immigration Enforcement and Legal Processes Monthly Tables,” <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/immigration-enforcement/immigration->

every one of them. While most people entered without inspection across the U.S.-Mexico border, millions entered with a visa and then overstayed.³⁶ Over 8.6 million entered the country before 2009, meaning they have now lived here for a minimum of 15 years.³⁷ Nearly five million have been here for a minimum of 25 years, and nearly 1.5 million have been here for a minimum of 35 years.³⁸ Without a path to permanent legal status, they have spent decades living in limbo; living, working, and often raising a family. They have become integral parts of their communities, and yet the law prevents them from securing the necessary paperwork that can make it formal.

Undocumented people are part of nearly every community and institution in the country. Over 100,000 undocumented children graduate from an American high school each year.³⁹ We estimate that there were 408,000 undocumented college students in 2021.⁴⁰ As of 2022, we estimate that there were roughly 1.7 million undocumented immigrants with a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴¹

Undocumented immigrants are also parents, spouses, and family members to millions of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents. Over 11.3 million U.S. citizens, plus an additional 2.4 million people with lawful permanent residency, live with someone who is undocumented (most often a member of their family).⁴² Nationwide, more than one in 13 children in K-12 education has at least one parent who is undocumented; in Nevada, one in every seven, in Texas, one in every eight, and in California, one in every 11.⁴³

While President Trump talks about targeting “criminal immigrants,” over 90 percent have no prior criminal record whatsoever.⁴⁴ Of the minority that do, the most common prior convictions are traffic offenses.⁴⁵ Efforts to ramp up arrests for a mass deportation campaign would therefore necessarily sweep up

[enforcement-and-legal-processes-monthly](#), last updated October 29, 2024. Roughly 500,000 additional people entered through the CHNV parole program over that period. Without more recent Census data, we do not know the total of undocumented immigrants that left the country in 2023 and 2024, so it is not possible to provide an exact estimate of the undocumented population as of today.

³⁶ Congressional Research Service, “Nonimmigrant Overstays: Overview and Policy Issues,” November 21, 2023, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/homesecc/R47848.pdf>.

³⁷ U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec, Office of Homeland Security Statistics, “Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2018–January 2022,” April 2024, at 4 https://ohss.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/2024_0418_ohss_estimates-of-the-unauthorized-immigrant-population-residing-in-the-united-states-january-2018%25E2%2580%2593january-2022.pdf.

³⁸ Id.

³⁹ Fwd.US, “The Post-DACA Generation is Here,” Mary 23, 2023, <https://www.fwd.us/news/undocumented-high-school-graduates/>.

⁴⁰ American Immigration Council, “Undocumented College Students,” August 2, 2023, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/undocumented-college-students-2023>.

⁴¹ American Immigration Council, “Mass Deportation: Devastating Costs to America, Its Budget and Economy,” October 2, 2024, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/mass-deportation>.

⁴² Fwd.US, “New data analysis shows 28 million people, including nearly 20 million Latinos, are at risk of family separation in 2025,” October 24, 2024, <https://www.fwd.us/news/mixed-status-families-oct/>.

⁴³ Pew Research Center, “Unauthorized immigrants and characteristics for states, 2022,” https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2024/07/SR_24.07.22_unauthorized-immigrants_table-3.xlsx.

⁴⁴ Muzaffar Chishti and Michelle Mittelstadt, “Unauthorized Immigrants with Criminal Convictions: Who Might Be a Priority for Removal?” *Migration Policy Institute*, November 2016, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/unauthorized-immigrants-criminal-convictions-who-might-be-priority-removal>.

⁴⁵ This is based on the profile of criminal records of individuals arrested by ICE. See, e.g., U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fiscal Year 2019 Enforcement and Removal Operations Report,” 2020, <https://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2019/eroReportFY2019.pdf>.

thousands of people who have no or minimal criminal histories. In October, the Council published an analysis of 42 years of demographic data confirming that there is no statistically significant correlation between the immigrant share of the population and the total crime rate in any state.⁴⁶

Instead of mass deportation, Congress could create a new path to permanent legal status allowing undocumented people already living here to file an application, pay a fee, and get some form of permanent status. The Council has studied the impact of the creation of a path to legal status for the undocumented population. In 2013, we examined the impact of the 1986 path to legal status created by the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and concluded that legalization “would be the cheapest federal workforce development and anti-poverty program for children in history.”⁴⁷ Economists agree that a path to legal status “is not only a humanitarian act; it is also a form of economic stimulus” that will “generate more tax revenue for federal, state, and local governments, as well as more consumer spending which sustains more jobs in U.S. businesses,” which “would benefit everyone by growing the economy and expanding the labor market.”⁴⁸ And we examined data from both the government and the academy showing that legalization programs do not drive increased migration, and if properly designed may actually reduce migration at the border.⁴⁹

Despite the economic benefits of legalization, President Trump plans to pursue mass deportations of millions of undocumented people. This year, the Council studied the impact of taking the country down this path.⁵⁰ In our October 2024 study, “Mass Deportation: Devastating Costs to America, Its Budget and Economy,” we examined the fiscal and economic impacts of mass deportations of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants present in the U.S. as of 2022, as well as the 2.3 million individuals who entered the country and were placed into removal proceedings from January 2023 through April 2024.⁵¹

Our analysis concludes that beyond the enormous human toll that mass deportations would take on the U.S., mass deportations would also impose extraordinary economic and fiscal damage to our country. Mass deportations would cost U.S. taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars, with an estimated cost of an 11-year operation to arrest, detain, process, and deport one million people per year at \$88 billion.⁵²

Mass deportations would also cause economic chaos. As millions are expelled, the U.S. population and labor force would shrink. So too would the economy. Prices would rise in sectors with significant undocumented workforces, including construction, agriculture, and hospitality. Building, maintaining,

⁴⁶ American Immigration Council, “Debunking the Myth of Immigrants and Crime,” October 17, 2024, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/debunking-myth-immigrants-and-crime>.

⁴⁷ Dr. Sherrie A. Kossoudji, “Back to the Future: The Impact of Legalization Then and Now,” American Immigration Council, January 31, 2013, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/back-future-impact-legalization-then-and-now>.

⁴⁸ American Immigration Council, “An Immigration Stimulus: The Economic Benefits of a Legalization Program for Unauthorized Immigrants,” April 2013, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/legalization_0.pdf.

⁴⁹ American Immigration Council, “Built to Last: How Immigration Reform Can Deter Unauthorized Immigration,” May 2013, https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/built_to_last_how_immigration_reform_can_deter_unauthorized_immigration.pdf.

⁵⁰ Portions of the aforementioned report are reproduced in this testimony.

⁵¹ American Immigration Council, “Mass Deportation: Devastating Costs to America, Its Budget and Economy,” October 2, 2024, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/mass-deportation>.

⁵² Id.

and repairing houses would become more expensive, as would groceries, restaurants, travel, and childcare. Every American would feel the pinch of inflation.

Overall, we estimate that a successful mass deportation campaign would lead to a loss in total GDP of 4.2 percent to 6.8 percent; in comparison, the GDP dropped by 4.3 percent during the Great Recession.⁵³ And just like that period, many Americans would lose their jobs. Even an *attempt* to deport millions of people will have repercussions for local economies. After all, undocumented immigrants are not just producers, they are also consumers. Collectively, they hold \$256.8 billion in annual purchasing power. If millions of people are deported or otherwise forced to leave, American businesses will close not just from a lack of workers, but also from a lack of customers.

A large-scale mass deportation campaign will also increase labor exploitation during the years in which it is carried out. Unscrupulous employers will dangle deportation over any of their workers who dare to push back, and will have the full force of the U.S. government to back up their threats.

Economic Impacts of Mass Deportation

Beyond the direct costs of the largest law enforcement operation in history, mass deportation would profoundly damage the U.S. economy. We used data from the most recent American Community Survey to estimate the economic impacts of deporting the 11 million undocumented people in the country as of 2022.

First, mass deportations would exacerbate ongoing U.S. labor shortages.⁵⁴ In 2022, nearly 90 percent of undocumented immigrants were of working age, compared to 61.3 percent of the U.S.-born population aged between 16 and 64, so undocumented immigrants are more likely to actively participate in the labor force. Losing these working-age undocumented immigrants would worsen the severe workforce challenges that many industries have already been struggling with in the past few years.

The impact of mass deportations would be concentrated in several key U.S. industries. The construction and agriculture industries would lose at least one in eight workers, while in hospitality, about one in 14 workers would be deported due to their undocumented status. Within those industries, some trades would be hit harder than others. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 42 percent of farmworkers are undocumented.⁵⁵ Our own analysis suggests that nearly one third of workers in major construction trades, such as plasterers, roofers, and painters, are undocumented. Similarly, 28 percent of agricultural graders and sorters, and a quarter of household cleaners, are undocumented.

The impact of losing these workers would be devastating. Labor shortages in the construction industry are already high, with the industry projecting a need to hire an additional 454,000 new workers in 2025 just to keep up with demand.⁵⁶ The construction workforce is already looking at the possibility of a “foreboding

⁵³ John Weinberg, “The Great Recession and its Aftermath,” Federal Reserve History, November 22, 2013, <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-recession-and-its-aftermath>.

⁵⁴ See Stephanie Ferguson Melhorn, “Understanding America’s Labor Shortage,” U.S. Chamber of Commerce, November 22, 2024 (“Right now, the latest data shows that we have 8 million job openings in the U.S. but only 6.8 million unemployed workers.”)

⁵⁵ U.S. Dep’t of Agriculture, “Farm Labor,” last updated December 6, 2024, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/#legalstatus>.

⁵⁶ Associated Builders and Contractors, “ABC: 2024 Construction Workforce Shortage Tops Half a Million,” January 31, 2024, <https://www.abc.org/News-Media/News-Releases/abc-2024-construction-workforce-shortage-tops-half-a-million>.

exodus of experience” as the median age of construction workers rises;⁵⁷ deporting an additional 1.5 million workers could destabilize the industry, rapidly increasing prices for construction labor and causing some construction firms to go under. Not only would the price of new houses rise, but so too would the price of maintenance and repair. These impacts would be felt not only by homeowners and likely home buyers, but also by the U.S. government, which would be required to spend more on any of its own construction projects, more on disaster recovery, and more on basic maintenance of any U.S. government property.

As prices rise and businesses falter, Americans would lose jobs. A recent study also found that for every 500,000 immigrants removed from the labor market due to deportation, U.S.-born workers lose 44,000 jobs.⁵⁸ Using that metric, deportation of 11 million undocumented immigrants could cause a loss of 968,000 jobs held by U.S. citizens.

Mass deportation would also reduce the overall size of the U.S. economy. Among the deported would be one million undocumented immigrant entrepreneurs, who generated \$27.1 billion in total business income in 2022. Losing the 157,800 undocumented entrepreneurs in neighborhood businesses would lead to disruptions to services that have become an integral part of community life and provide local jobs for Americans. We also find that undocumented immigrant households have a combined purchasing power of \$256.8 billion. This is money that goes into the economy and stimulates broader economic growth. After all, undocumented immigrants not only produce goods; they also consume goods, and that money goes back into the U.S. economy. Mass deportation would disrupt this economic behavior and damage the economy.

Mass deportation would also deprive federal, state, and local governments of billions in tax contributions from undocumented households. In 2022 alone, undocumented immigrant households paid \$46.8 billion in federal taxes and \$29.3 billion in state and local taxes.

Yet undocumented immigrants are unable to benefit from many of the programs they pay into, including Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance. The U.S. would lose out on key contributions undocumented households make to social safety net programs annually, including \$22.6 billion to Social Security and \$5.7 billion to Medicare. As the U.S. population ages, the loss of these payments would make it increasingly challenging to keep social safety net programs solvent.

Beyond broader economic impacts, millions of families would feel the pinch caused by deportation. Deporting undocumented immigrants would separate four million mixed-status families, affecting 8.5 million U.S. citizens with undocumented family members (5.1 million of whom are U.S. citizen children). Many of those who would be deported are breadwinners, and mass deportations would slash the income of their households by an average of 62.7 percent (\$51,200 per year). In many cases, U.S. citizens may choose to leave as well to remain with a loved one who was being deported, which would make the economic impact even worse.

⁵⁷ Zachary Phillips, “Construction’s age problem: A foreboding exodus of experience,” *Construction Dive*, May 25, 2023, <https://www.constructiondive.com/news/construction-labor-retirement-recruiting-dei/651184/>.

⁵⁸ Chloe East, “The labor market impact of deportations,” *Brookings*, September 18, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-labor-market-impact-of-deportations/>.

Taken together, we calculate that mass deportation would lead to a loss of 4.2 percent to 6.8 percent of annual U.S. GDP, or \$1.1 trillion to \$1.7 trillion in 2022 dollars. In comparison, the U.S. GDP shrunk by 4.3 percent during the Great Recession between 2007 and 2009. The negative impact would be the most significant in California, Texas, and Florida, the three states that were home to 47.2 percent of the country's undocumented immigrants in 2022 and where one in every 20 residents would be deported.

Conclusion

President Trump's actions in his first months show that he has taken the first steps to go down the path of mass deportations. If we continue in that direction the entire country will suffer. Millions of mixed-status families will be torn apart or forced to leave, and millions of people will be kicked out of their jobs and the lives they've made here for decades. In the wake of their removal, the economy will shrink. Prices will rise across most sectors, and may increase the most in construction, agriculture, and hospitality. As inflation rises and the economy shrinks, businesses will go under, workers will lose their jobs, and we will become poorer both as a nation and as individuals. We would also leave a permanent stain on this country's legacy and undermine our credibility around the world. Who would ever trust the United States to talk about human rights if we forcibly evict millions of people at the point of a gun?

By contrast, if Congress passes a path to permanent legal status, we can benefit as a nation. Bringing millions of people out of the shadows will allow them to obtain stability, fight against exploitation, and contribute even more to this country. Rather than self-sabotage, we should follow the proud tradition of this nation and give people a real chance to come into compliance with the law rather than bring down the hammer.

“Consequences of Failure: How Biden’s Policies Fueled the Border Crisis”

Testimony Before Committee on Homeland Security / Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

United States House of Representatives

March 25, 2025

Lora Ries

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My name is Lora Ries and I am the Director of the Border Security and Immigration Center at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

When trying to solve a historic problem like the intentional mass illegal migration this country experienced the past four years, it is important to ask the question, “How did we get here?”—not just to fix the problem, but also to avoid repeating it in the future.

The decision to open the border was a policy choice made by Joe Biden’s presidential campaign. The American public saw glimpses of his future policies in late 2019 and 2020. During a presidential primary campaign debate in 2019, Joe Biden said he would “make sure...we immediately surge to the border all those people that are seeking asylum. They deserve to be heard. That’s who we are. We’re a nation that says if you want to flee and you’re fleeing oppression, you should come.”¹ In January 2020, Biden tweeted that he would end the Remain in Mexico program on day one.² In an August 2020 media interview, Biden said, “There will not be another foot of wall constructed [by] my administration.”³

Then, once Biden was sworn in as President, he wasted no time unleashing his open border agenda. On the first day of his Administration, Biden began halting effective immigration enforcement and anti-fraud measures. His orders included stopping construction of the border wall system, ending

¹Karl Salzmann, “Flashback: Biden Tells Migrants to ‘Surge to the Border,’” *Washington Free Beacon*, May 10, 2023, <https://freebeacon.com/biden-administration/flashback-biden-tells-migrants-to-surge-to-the-border/> (accessed March 16, 2025).

²Joe Biden, X, Jan. 29, 2020, https://x.com/JoeBiden/status/1222691999364657152?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1222691999364657152%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.washingtonpost.com%2Fnational%2Fbiden-immigration-policy-changes%2F2020%2F12%2F22%2F2eb9ef92-4400-11eb-8deb-b948d0931c16_story.html (accessed March 21, 2025).

³Barbara Sprunt, “Biden Would End Border Wall Construction, But Wouldn’t Tear Down Trump’s Additions,” NPR, August 5, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/05/899266045/biden-would-end-border-wall-construction-but-wont-tear-down-trump-s-additions> (accessed March 16, 2025).

enrollments of aliens in the effective anti-asylum fraud Remain in Mexico program, ordering that no deportations would occur for the first 100 days of his Administration, and revoking President Trump’s executive order and presidential memorandum ordering the collection of citizenship information during the decennial Census and exclusion of illegal aliens from the Census apportionment of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives.⁴

Biden directed federal agencies to refer to legal and illegal aliens alike as “noncitizens,” thereby ignoring statutory language to erase the line between legal and illegal immigration.⁵

His political appointees implemented policies to instruct U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents to process most inadmissible aliens they encountered into the U.S. in violation of the immigration statute instead of returning them across the border.⁶

The Left and the media referred to all encountered illegal aliens as “asylum seekers” in an attempt to generate American empathy for the masses who were coming to the U.S. Meanwhile, the real consequence of this propaganda was to encourage inadmissible aliens to file fraudulent asylum applications to buy themselves more time to remain in the U.S. and gain work authorization.

Using a 2021 policy memorandum, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas restricted U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE’s) ability to execute most of its immigration enforcement functions, limiting investigations, arrests, detentions, prosecutions, and deportations to spies, terrorists, some aggravated felons, and aliens who illegally crossed the border after November 1, 2020.⁷

Yet, as the data shows, the Biden Administration did not operate even according to those very limited enforcement priorities. Echoing Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign statement that “we are five days away from fundamentally transforming the United States of America,” Mayorkas bragged in January 2022 that “we have fundamentally changed immigration enforcement. For the first time ever, our policy explicitly states that a non-citizen’s unlawful presence in the United States will not,

⁴National Immigration Law Center, “Biden Administration Day One Immigration Actions,” January 28, 2021, <https://www.nilc.org/resources/biden-administration-day-one-immigration-actions/> (accessed March 18, 2025); President Joseph R. Biden Jr., Executive Order 13986, “Ensuring a Lawful and Accurate Enumeration and Apportionment Pursuant to the Decennial Census,” January 20, 2021, *Federal Register*, Vol. 86, No. 14 (January 25, 2021), pp.7015–7017, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01755/ensuring-a-lawful-and-accurate-enumeration-and-apportionment-pursuant-to-the-decennial-census> (accessed March 18, 2025).

⁵Memorandum from Troy A. Miller, Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, to Deputy Commissioner et al., “Subject: Updated Terminology for CBP Communications and Materials,” April 19, 2021, <https://lawprofessors.typepad.com/files/4-19-21-cbp-memo.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2025).

⁶Adam Shaw, Bill Melugin, and Griff Jenkins, “Mayorkas Tells Border Patrol Agents That ‘Above 85%’ of Illegal Immigrants Released into US: Sources,” Fox News, January 8, 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/mayorkas-tells-border-patrol-agents-illegal-immigrants-released-into-us-sources> (accessed March 19, 2025).

⁷Memorandum from Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to Tae D. Johnson, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Troy Miller, Acting Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Ur Jaddou, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; Robert Silvers, Under Secretary, Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans; Katherine Culliton-González, Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties; and Lynn Parker Dupree, Chief Privacy Officer, Privacy Office, “Subject: Guidelines for the Enforcement of Civil Immigration Law,” September 30, 2021, <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/news/guidelines-civilimmigrationlaw.pdf> (accessed March 19, 2025).

by itself, be a basis for the initiation of an enforcement action.” He called this “a profound shift away from the prior administration’s indiscriminate enforcement.”⁸ In reality, Mayorkas’s policies were clear violations of federal law.

Violated Immigration Parole

In addition to opening the border and ignoring immigration enforcement statutes, Mayorkas violated immigration benefit statutes passed by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The most blatant of these violations was his use of immigration parole. The INA states that:

[T]he [Secretary of Homeland Security] may...in his discretion parole into the United States temporarily...only on a case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit any alien applying for admission to the United States, but such parole of such alien shall not be regarded as an admission of the alien and when the purposes of such parole shall, in the opinion of the [Secretary], have been served the alien shall forthwith return or be returned to the custody from which he was paroled and thereafter his case shall continue to be dealt with in the same manner as that of any other applicant for admission to the United States.⁹

Congress later added the following statutory language to prevent the abuse of parole to bring refugees into the U.S. more quickly:

The [Secretary] may not parole into the United States an alien who is a refugee unless the [Secretary] determines that compelling reasons in the public interest with respect to that particular alien require that the alien be paroled into the United States rather than be admitted as a refugee under section 1157 of this title.¹⁰

Congress intended that parole would be used very rarely in special circumstances when an alien does not have adequate time to use legal visa or refugee processes—for example, when coming to the U.S. for emergency surgery or to testify in a criminal case. Therefore, Congress logically did not provide work authorization for aliens who receive temporary parole.

Despite this clear statutory text, Mayorkas repeatedly used mass and categorical parole to allow tens of thousands of inadmissible aliens to bypass our lawful visa and refugee processes each month. He created parole programs for aliens from Afghanistan, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ukraine, and Venezuela, as well as aliens who have

⁸Adam Shaw, “Biden’s First Year: Mayorkas Says Admin Has ‘Fundamentally Changed’ Interior Immigration Enforcement,” Fox News, January 20, 2022, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/bidens-first-year-mayorkas-admin-fundamentally-changed-interior-immigration-enforcement> (accessed March 19, 2025).

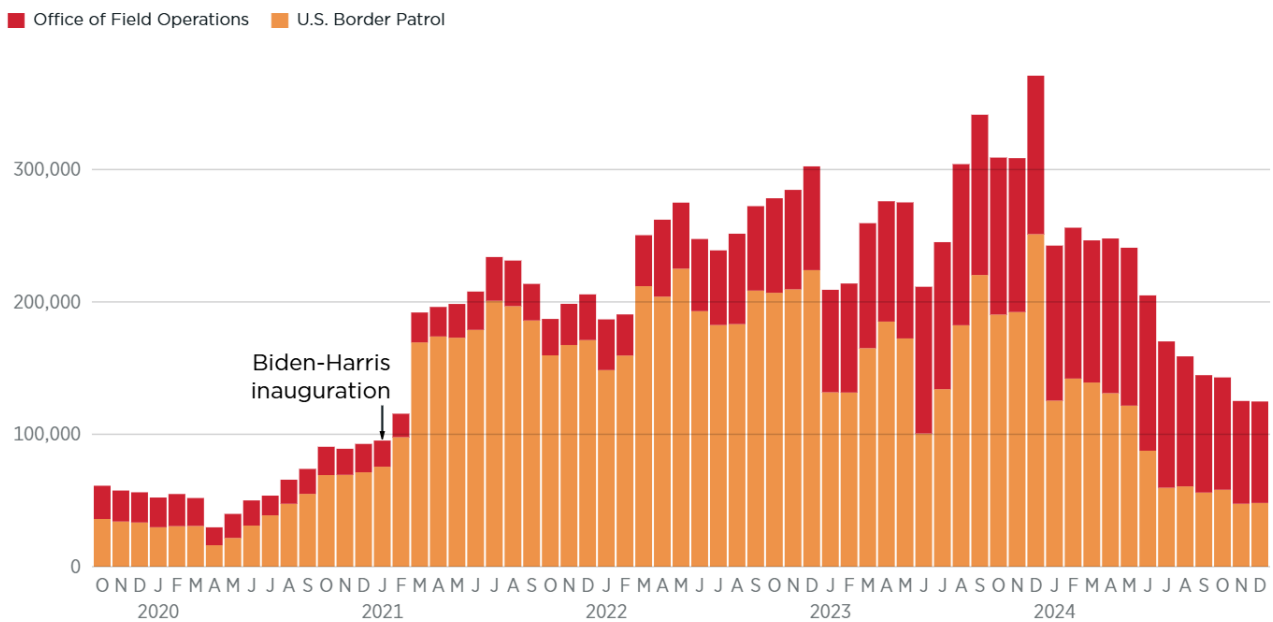
⁹8 U.S. Code § 1182(d)(5)(A), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1182> (accessed March 19, 2025).

¹⁰8 U.S. Code § 1182(d)(5)(B), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1182> (accessed March 19, 2025).

previously been deported¹¹ and aliens who have resided in the U.S. illegally for at least 10 years and are married to U.S. citizens.¹²

In addition, Mayorkas created a parole program under which any alien could use the CBP Mobile One application to make an appointment at a land or air port of entry where CBP paroled them into the U.S.¹³ In other words, instead of securing the border, the Biden Administration created a deceptive shell game by shifting the illegal flow to the ports (red segments in chart below) while pointing at (briefly) falling numbers of aliens crossing the southern border between these ports of entry (orange segments in chart below).

Monthly Unlawful Entry Encounters



Secretary Mayorkas also gave his mass parolees renewable work authorization without congressional authorization. He propagandized his bypass of the statutory visa and refugee processes as “expanding lawful pathways” and insisted that parole was granted on a “case-by-case basis.” Federal judges, however, have found otherwise. For example, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals rebuked DHS’s abuse of parole in its December 2021 decision regarding the Secretary’s termination

¹¹U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Humanitarian or Significant Public Benefit Parole for Individuals Outside the United States,” last reviewed/updated August 19, 2024, https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian_parole (accessed March 19, 2025).

¹²U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Implementation of Keeping Families Together,” Notice of Implementation of the Keeping Families Together Process,” *Federal Register*, Vol. 89, No. 161 (August 20, 2024), pp. 67459–67490, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-08-20/pdf/2024-18725.pdf> (accessed March 19, 2025).

¹³News release, “DHS Scheduling System for Safe, Orderly and Humane Border Processing Goes Live on CBP One™ App,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, January 12, 2023, <https://www.dhs.gov/archive/news/2023/01/12/dhs-scheduling-system-safe-orderly-and-humane-border-processing-goes-live-cbp-onetm> (accessed March 19, 2025).

of the Migrant Protection Protocols. The court held that “[d]eciding to parole aliens *en masse* is the opposite of *case-by-case* decision-making,” and added that “DHS’s pretended power to parole aliens while ignoring the limitations Congress imposed on the parole power...[is] not *nonenforcement*; it’s *misenforcement*, suspension of the INA, or both.”¹⁴

Rendered Asylum Meaningless

The Biden Administration grossly abused America’s second most important immigration benefit after U.S. citizenship— asylum. Beyond telling aliens to surge our border and claim asylum, as Biden did during his 2020 primary debate, and de facto support from the media, which refer to all illegal aliens as “asylum seekers,” Mayorkas violated immigration statutes to facilitate asylum fraud both procedurally and substantively.

He violated Congress’s establishment of jurisdiction over asylum applications by replacing immigration judges, ICE attorneys, and the adversarial process with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) asylum officers who processed both initial claims and second-stage applications for border crossers. Without cross-examination by ICE attorneys and immigration judges, USCIS asylum officers were more likely to rubber-stamp and grant weak, questionable, and unverified asylum claims.¹⁵

Substantively, the Administration supported claims of domestic violence, gang activity, general crime, and climate change as grounds for asylum. These claims do not meet the requirements of the law, which are based on persecution because of an alien’s race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. We now find ourselves far afield from the refugee protection the U.S. committed to provide after World War II. The benefit of asylum has been watered down and abused to be just another way to bring more aliens into the U.S. and allow them to remain here.¹⁶

Encouraged Unaccompanied Children Border Crossings

Secretary Mayorkas repeatedly stated publicly that he would not turn unaccompanied children back from the border. This served as an advertisement for cartels to smuggle children into the U.S. During

¹⁴*Texas v. Biden*, No. 21–10806 (5th Cir. 2021) (emphasis in original).

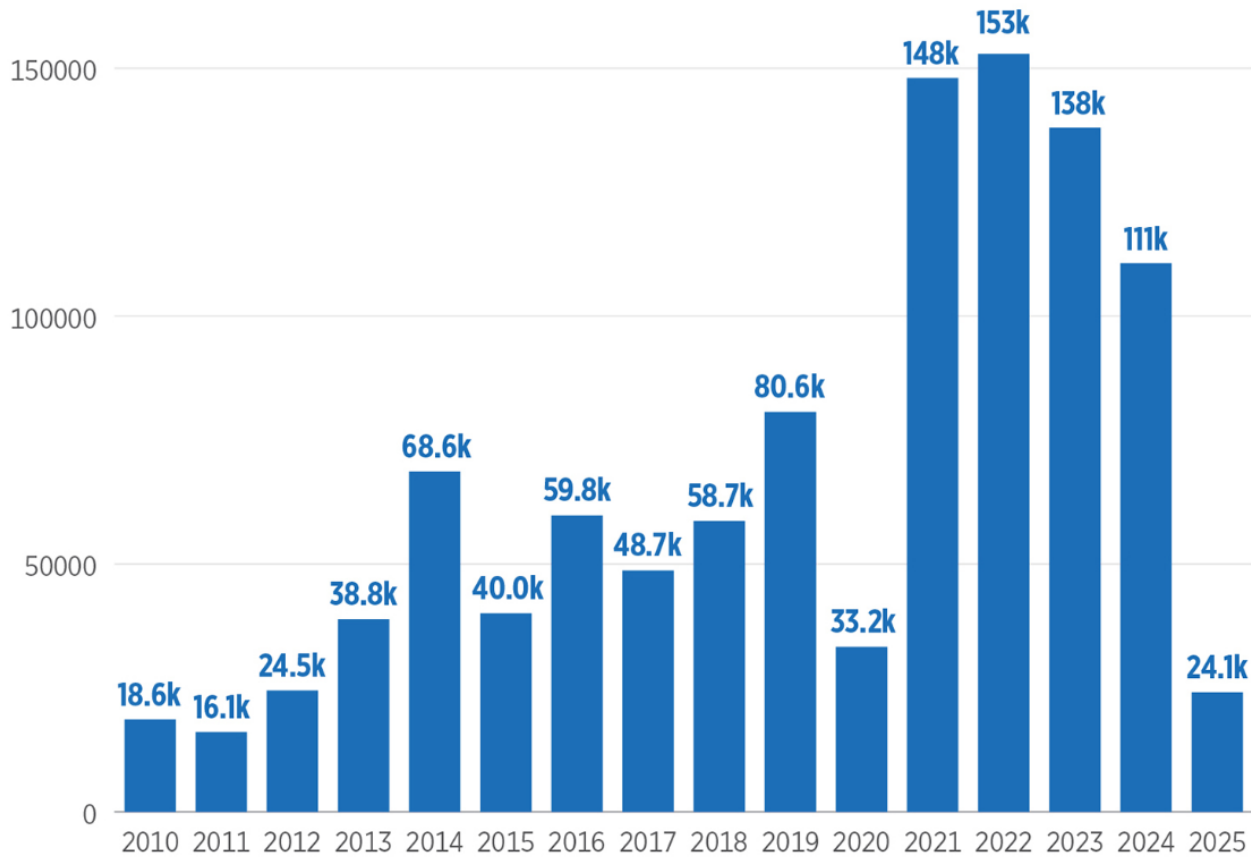
¹⁵USCIS asylum grants have been significantly higher than application denials. As of September 2024, USCIS had denied 4,600 asylum cases and granted 16,932 applications in FY 2024. Table, “Number of Form I-589, Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal by Quarter, Form Status, and Processing Time (July 1, 2024–September 30, 2024),” in U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Immigration and Citizenship Data: All USCIS Application and Petition Form Types (Fiscal Year 2024, Quarter 4),” December 18, 2024, <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data> (accessed March 19, 2025).

¹⁶Tibisay Zea, “How the Asylum System Became the Main Avenue for Mass Migration to the US,” *The World*, February 12, 2024, <https://theworld.org/stories/2024/02/12/how-asylum-system-became-main-avenue-mass-migration-us> (accessed March 19, 2025).

the Biden Administration, the CBP encountered over 550,000 unaccompanied children, a historic and terrible record.¹⁷

Unaccompanied Alien Children

TOTAL APPREHENSIONS OF UNACCOMPANIED ALIEN CHILDREN AGES 0-17, BY FISCAL YEAR



SOURCES: U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and Heritage Foundation research.

 heritage.org

The results were gut-wrenching as seen in videos and photos of children left at the river’s edge, dropped over the border wall, or abandoned. The Biden Administration stopped DNA testing of suspected smugglers posing as families with children at the border. Border agents saw children that appeared to be drugged asleep so they could not respond to border agents’ questions about the adults accompanying them.

¹⁷Table, “FY Comparison by Demographic,” in U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Nationwide Encounters,” last modified March 13, 2025, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters> (accessed March 19, 2025).

Their misery did not end once the children entered the U.S. Unable to find and vet enough sponsors to take in the children, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) turned children over to unknown and unvetted adults, subjecting the children to potential sex trafficking and child labor. HHS later reported losing contact with at least 300,000 of the children.¹⁸

Relied on NGOs and Their Infrastructure

The Biden Administration paid tens of billions of dollars to NGOs to build an infrastructure from Panama north towards our southern border and throughout the U.S. to facilitate mass illegal immigration. The taxpayer money went to NGOs through many accounts and several departments: DHS, HHS, the State Department, USAID, the Justice Department, and more. In addition, the Biden Administration paid sanctuary jurisdictions to provide illegal aliens shelter, health care, documentation, and legal services, among other services.

Due to these open border policies and operations, the backlogs at both the Justice Department and DHS increased significantly. The number of cases in the Justice Department immigration courts backlog tripled from 1.2 million when Biden came into office to more than 3.7 million as of October 2024.¹⁹ The number of immigration benefit applications pending at DHS’s USCIS grew from over 6.3 million cases²⁰ when Biden became President to over 9.4 million through September 2024.²¹

The results of the Biden Administration’s open border operations were record-setting and devastating to America’s sovereignty, security, public safety, and economy. That is why it was the number one issue for so many Americans last November. With a new Administration, we are already seeing what securing the border does to the number of CBP encounters, but it will take years and significant resources for interior enforcement to get our immigration system to be lawful, orderly, and manageable.

* * * * *

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¹⁸U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, “Management Alert—ICE Cannot Monitor All Unaccompanied Migrant Children Released from DHS and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Custody,” Final Management Alert OIG-24-46, August 19, 2024, p. 1, <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2024-08/OIG-24-46-Aug24.pdf> (accessed March 19, 2025).

¹⁹Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, “Immigration Court Backlog: Historical Backlog (from 1998),” <https://tracreports.org/phptools/immigration/backlog/> (accessed March 19, 2025).

²⁰Table, “Number of Service-wide Forms by Quarter, Form Status, and Processing Time, Fiscal Year 2021, Quarter 1,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/reports/Quarterly_All_Forms_FY2021Q1.pdf (accessed March 19, 2025).

²¹Table, “Number of Service-wide Forms by Quarter, Form Status, and Processing Time, July 1, 2024–September 30, 2024,” in U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Immigration and Citizenship Data: All USCIS Application and Petition Form Types (Fiscal Year 2024, Quarter 4),” December 18, 2024, <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data> (accessed March 19, 2025).

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NATIONAL BORDER PATROL COUNCIL

PROTECTING THOSE WHO PROTECT OUR BORDERS

**Statement of Jon Anfinen
On behalf of the National Border Patrol Council**

**Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement Hearing Entitled:**

“Part 1: Consequences of Failure: How Biden’s Policies Fueled the Border Crisis”

March 25, 2025

Chairman Guest, Ranking Member Correa, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today. I hope that my testimony will assist the Subcommittee in better understanding how the executive actions taken by President Biden and his Administration directly resulted in an unprecedented security and humanitarian crisis along our borders and within our country.

The bottom line up front is that it did not need to happen this way, and we need to do what we can to prevent it from happening again.

My name is Jon Anfinen, and I am the Executive Vice President of the National Border Patrol Council (NBPC). My testimony is rooted in my perspective and lived experiences as a frontline Agent stationed in Del Rio Sector in Texas, as well as the observations, perspectives, and lived experiences of the Agents I am honored to represent. The NBPC is the union that represents over 16,500 frontline Border Patrol Agents and support staff that protect this country and enforce our laws each day. Unfortunately, during the four years that President Biden and his Administration were in office, frontline Agents were unable to properly protect our nation and fully enforce our laws.

The U.S. Border Patrol has always seen fluctuations in the number of encounters of aliens or “traffic” we detect crossing our borders, especially our southwest border, typically at the start of each new presidential administration. However, to say the changes we saw within the first few weeks of the Biden Administration were unprecedented is an understatement. Not only was the entire world encouraged to illegally cross our borders, primarily to abuse the asylum system, but it caused our agents to be sidelined and truly unable to do our jobs.

In effect, our job was changed from one of immigration and law enforcement to working on a virtual assembly line, simply completing one step in the process of abusing the asylum system and the United States’ immigration laws. Gone were the days of Agents patrolling in

the brush and desert, and instead, we were relegated to sit behind a computer for an entire shift, all the while being notified that groups of illegal aliens – who were not turning themselves in for apprehension – were disappearing into the interior of the country, having been spotted on cameras or reported by members of the community.

While we had no idea who these people were, where they were going, or what their intentions were at the time – all serious concerns – based on past investigations and intelligence, assessments show that many of these aliens have prior criminal convictions in the U.S. and also are likely smuggling fentanyl or other dangerous drugs into our communities. At the time, it was practically a given that someone could cross the border and be released, so the fact that some people chose to sneak in and avoid that process suggests that at least some of them are people we should be concerned about.

Not only were the previous four years a boon for the cartels in Mexico, allowing them to smuggle practically anyone or anything into the country, it created an entirely new business model for them. People have always needed permission from the cartels to cross the border, and traditionally, the cartels had to make arrangements to use smugglers to transport people via their smuggling network to their final destination. While the cartels still did that during the past four years to smuggle people who wanted nothing to do with the Border Patrol, there was an entirely different and much larger population just needed to get across the border and give up. As a result, Agents could not do their job, and instead had to watch camera footage of groups getting away to parts unknown.

To put it in context, during both of President Obama's terms, there was a total of approximately 1,089,000 gotaways. During President Trump's first term, there were approximately 549,000 gotaways. However, during President Biden's four years, there were approximately 2,000,000 gotaways, though it is generally believed the number is much higher because Agents were not in the field enough to get a more accurate count of those who absconded into the country.

Along the southwest border, specifically in Texas, where I work, cartel members in Mexico basically became ferry operators, tasked only with getting people across the river, where they were told to flag down a Border Patrol Agent. In other areas, groups were required to pay a fee and were left to get across the river on their own, resulting in what is referred to as the deadliest border in the world. We will likely never know how many people died, but here is what we do know to give you some context.

During President Obama's two terms, there was an average of approximately 370 deaths at the border that were detected per year, with FY12 being the worst with approximately 470 deaths.

During President Trump's first term, there was an average of approximately 280 deaths at the border that were detected per year, with FY 20 being the worst with approximately 250 deaths.

And during President Biden's four years, the average was approximately 690 deaths at the border that were detected per year – FY 22 was the worst of his four years with over 900 deaths, the highest number of deaths in any year going back as far as I have been able to research. That was an average of 75 deaths per month in that fiscal year, not to mention the bodies that were encountered by local officials, straining county resources by filling up morgues in counties up and down the border. For example, Maverick County, where Eagle Pass, Texas is located, had to bring in refrigerator trucks to store the bodies of unidentified people who died trying to illegally enter the country because their morgue was full, something that increasingly happened up and down the border as illegal crossings continued to increase.

Because of the massive increase in tragic and horrific incidents, some agents – those who were fortunate enough to be in the field and not processing – were tasked with search and rescue or body recovery efforts. And while search and rescue operations and providing medical care are not unusual tasks for Agents, we had never seen it on this scale.

We have hundreds of Border Patrol Agents trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), who are supposed to be deployed in the field to help people in areas with limited emergency medical services (EMS) and resources. Instead, they were frequently tasked with screening asylum-seekers at processing facilities or as the migrants were loaded onto buses to head to the processing facilities. In addition, when contracts were spun up to provide medical services within the facilities, that didn't mean EMTs were automatically deployed to the field because there was always processing to do. This often resulted in non-EMT Agents being the ones on the scene to try and rescue people who were sick and dying, including those who had no chance of survival.

In the Del Rio Sector, when crossings were at their worst, some months involved an average of more than one death per day. Several children, sometimes entire families, were swept away by the deceptively calm-looking water in the Rio Grande River, causing Agents and local EMS personnel to scramble to launch rescue efforts or recovery efforts – either was just as likely.

I remember one incident in particular in August 2022 in Eagle Pass, Texas, where a toddler and an infant – two siblings – had gone under the water while a family crossed the river. Agents on the boat unit responded, pulled some of them from the water, including the kids, and performed CPR on the kids, doing the best they could to save them. The toddler passed away, and the infant went to the hospital, but passed away a few days later.

The Agents did their best to save them and then spent the rest of the day dealing with questions from the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR), like “How long did you perform CPR? Who told you to stop performing CPR? How many rounds of CPR did you perform?” Congress previously tasked CBP OPR with investigating the death of people in our custody and providing a report to Congress

within 72 hours, which has caused Agents who have dealt with traumatic events to relive those events over and over in an attempt by OPR to figure out if they needed to report a particular death to Congress.

The month after these two siblings drowned, eight people died in one drowning incident as they were swept away by the river – this just kept happening, over and over.

Things like this weigh heavily on our Agents, as does the never-ending flow of children generally being put in dangerous situations. A lot of our employees are parents, and most of us can see our own kids when we look at small children playing on the ground in a processing facility, sitting in the dirt at the border, or when their lifeless body is pulled from the river. Situations and incidents like these, which became the norm under the Biden Administration, contributed to a significant increase in mental health challenges faced by our Agents.

Since FY2015, CBP has had 101 employee suicides, with 83% of those involving U.S. Border Patrol and Office of Field Operations employees. In 2022, when the border crisis was peaking, there was a 50% increase in employee suicides when compared to the previous seven-year average. And while their reasons for committing suicide are typically unknown, we do know that having to deal with objectively terrible and sad things at work, day in and day out, does nothing to help anyone's mental health.

For many years, CBP tried to pretend that suicide was not a problem for the workforce, typically by not acknowledging that an employee committed suicide. In recent years, however, CBP has devoted significant resources to addressing this situation, including recruiting Operational Psychologists, Resilience Specialists, and even a suicidologist to tackle the problem.

While Agents were doing their best to hold on during the worst and most tragic days we've ever experienced as Border Patrol Agents, a large chunk of the country, media, Congress, and the Biden Administration did everything they could to demonize us.

In one very public example that I was able to observe up close and personal, Agents assigned to the Del Rio Sector's Horse Patrol Unit were deployed to the land underneath the port of entry in Del Rio, Texas, after thousands of Haitian immigrants began illegally crossing the river from Mexico in September 2021. A day after we hit our highwater mark of almost 15,000 people under and next to the bridge, the spot where most people had been crossing the river was shut down, causing them to start crossing in a different location downriver.

The Horse Patrol Unit was asked to help deter some people from crossing at this new location, and while doing so, pictures and video were recorded of them doing the job they were trained to do: use horses to detain people. Some folks in the media immediately

mischaracterized what was taking place, claiming that agents were carrying whips and were whipping these Haitian immigrants, which was ultimately determined to be false.

However, what followed was an unprecedented attack on these Agents and the U.S. Border Patrol itself. While DHS leadership initially asked people to pause and wait for an investigation to be completed, it was not long before the administration's tone changed. President Biden stated that the immigrants were "strapped" and said, "I promise you those people will pay. They will be investigated. There will be consequences." Vice President Harris stated that the agents' behavior was "horrible," it evoked images of slavery, and that there "needs to be consequences and accountability" because "human beings should not be treated that way."

In the end, it was confirmed that the agents were not carrying whips, and they were not using anything else as a whip, ultimately clearing them of the misconduct allegations. But not before the media frenzy turned the lives of them and their family's upside down.

The result of all of this: even with strong Congressional funding and support, the Border Patrol has been unable to grow our workforce and recruit and retain enough Agents to properly secure our border because who wants to start a new career when the administration clearly does not support the mission or the Agents performing it?

The bottom line is that situations like this and the overall demonization of an entire agency have led to CBP and the U.S. Border Patrol being unable to hire enough Agents to account for attrition for several years. And when we do have a year where we happen to have a net gain, it is only by a relative handful of Agents because too many incumbent agents have decided they had enough and retired as soon as they were eligible to do so.

We currently have approximately 19,500 Border Patrol Agents on duty to protect our border. Of this number, more than 2,500 are eligible to retire – today. These agents could literally put in their retirement papers and be gone tomorrow. Another 4,000 agents will be eligible to retire in the next four years. In total, we are looking at nearly one-third of our current workforce potentially leaving in the next four years.

Why does this matter? Because under the last administration, we had approximately two million illegal aliens observed on Border Patrol surveillance platforms walking right into this country without being arrested. We saw them, but we literally did not have enough agents to arrest them. That is what happens when you do not have enough manpower to meet the mission.

Similarly, we lack something as simple as reliable transportation to allow Agents to perform that mission. As of the end of FY 2024, over 50% of the U.S. Border Patrol's vehicle fleet was retirement-eligible. Of those vehicles, approximately 1,100, or 7%, are on track to be replaced, but they will take anywhere from nine months to two years to receive. The average time from ordering a new vehicle to its delivery is approximately 403 days. Due to

the age and worn state of our fleet, vehicles are being used far longer than intended, resulting in millions of dollars in additional maintenance costs and forcing newer vehicles to be used more frequently, thereby drastically shortening their already relatively short lifespan. In some locations, we have vehicles being used over 16 hours per day, as one Agent waits for another Agent's shift to end so they can take the same vehicle back to the border.

President Trump recognizes these challenges. He has proposed increasing Border Patrol Agent pay and offering retention bonuses to keep the agents we already have. In addition, he has proposed recruitment bonuses to add an additional 10,000 agents above our current staffing level. I hope that all of you will support these initiatives as they are brought forward in reconciliation and through the FY 2026 appropriations process.

I thank the Subcommittee for the invitation to be here and for your time this morning. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.