Options in Brief

Option 1: Open the United States to the World

From its earliest days, the United States has been a land of opportunity for people outside U.S. borders. Each wave of immigrants has contributed to the United States' greatness and has enriched society. Today, people, ideas, and goods travel the globe at a pace unseen before. Instead of relying on rigid notions of borders and old ideas about a singular "American" identity, the United States should embrace the opportunities that globalization and multiculturalism present. The borders should be open to new immigrants and refugees, whatever their religion, language, race, or ethnicity. By welcoming a diverse group of people to its shores, the United States both enriches its culture and benefits from the skills and experiences that immigrants bring. In the long term, the talents, drive, and dreams of immigrants and refugees will benefit everyone in the United States.

Option 2: Restrict Immigration

War, terrorism, hunger, and disease plague an ever-growing portion of humanity. Protecting the United States from the threats posed by outsiders must be the country's first priority. The United States must recognize that it can do little to end the misery that haunts much of the world. Meanwhile, the forces of economic change have left millions of U.S. citizens struggling to keep up, and the growing threat from Muslim terrorists must not be ignored. At a time when protecting the security, economy, and culture of the country is crucial, the United States cannot afford to keep the door open every year to roughly one million newcomers. The United States should drastically reduce the number of immigrants it accepts and commit the resources necessary to take control of U.S. borders and prevent terrorism. It is time to focus on what is best for the citizens of the United States.

Option 3: Admit the Talent We Need

Every country has the right to promote its national interests. U.S. immigration policy should be designed to serve the country's economic and social needs, not to solve the world's problems. The United States must ensure that U.S. immigration policy strengthens the economy and, by doing so, improves the livelihoods of U.S. citizens. The United States must implement an immigration policy that boosts its international competitiveness while also protecting the domestic economy. The United States should open its doors to scientists and engineers from abroad. To help U.S. factories, farms, and service industries hold down costs, we should allow a limited number of foreigners to work temporarily in low-wage jobs. The United States must discourage undocumented immigration. By forging ahead with a realistic, long-term strategy, immigration policy can work for the United States.

Option 4: Make Emigration Unnecessary

The people of the world are on the move. Population growth, the spread of war and violence, fears of persecution, and the age-old curses of hunger, poverty, and disease drive people from their homes. The United States is the destination of choice for many of these people. But opening the doors to large-scale immigration causes problems here and abroad. The United States must lead the international community in solving the problems that cause people to leave their countries and come to the United States. By improving living standards for the world's disadvantaged, the United States can reduce the forces that drive immigrants and refugees to its borders. This process will take time, and the United States must act accordingly by admitting refugees in the meantime. But, in the end, making emigration unnecessary will benefit all people.

Option 1: Open the United States to the World

From its earliest days, the United States has been a land of opportunity for people outside U.S. borders. Each wave of immigrants has contributed to the United States' greatness and has enriched society. Today, people, ideas, and goods travel the globe at a pace unseen before. Instead of relying on rigid notions of borders and old ideas about a singular "American" identity, the United States should embrace the opportunities that globalization and multiculturalism present. The borders should be open to new immigrants and refugees, whatever their religion, language, race, or ethnicity. By welcoming a diverse group of people to its shores, the United States both enriches its culture and benefits from the skills and experiences that immigrants bring.

The latest generations of immigrants and refugees include the most resourceful people from a rich variety of cultures and regions. Even those lacking a formal education are driven to improve their lives with their unshakable work ethic. They recognize that the United States rewards hard work and ambition like no other country in the world. As the country that accepts the largest number of immigrants, the United States has an advantage against its top economic rivals. Immigrants put the United States in touch with the tastes and preferences of consumers worldwide and give U.S. companies a competitive edge in their ability to reach an international audience. In the long term, the talents, drive, and dreams of immigrants and refugees will benefit all people in the United States.

Option 1 is based on the following beliefs

- The United States' strength lies in its diversity—particularly in the hard work, innovative ideas, and cultural contributions of immigrants and refugees.
- Immigration does not threaten U.S. national security. Increasing immigration, especially from war-torn areas, could improve U.S. security by providing safety, work, and a chance at a stable life for immigrants, deterring them from instead looking to terrorist organizations that claim to provide this stability.
- Immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy.
- The way that detained undocumented people are treated in the United States today is wrong.
- History shows that people of all races, religions, and cultures become valuable members of U.S. society.

What policies should we pursue?

- Prioritize family reunification and ensure that families are not separated during the immigration process.
- Admit more refugees by opening our doors to people worldwide who have a legitimate fear of persecution or violence.
- Adjust immigration laws to permit greater immigration from countries, such as China and Mexico, that have been the victims of unfair restrictions in the past.
- Provide immigrants with more opportunities, job training, and English-language instruction to speed their adjustment to U.S. life.
- Ensure that everyone in the United States, including undocumented immigrants, has access to education, basic healthcare, and other essential services.
- Make the process of naturalization more efficient so that undocumented immigrants, including children and youth, may be recognized and rewarded for their contributions to U.S. society.

From the Record

George Washington, in a letter to Reverend Francis Adrian Vanderkemp, May 28, 1788

"I had always hoped that this land might become a safe and agreeable asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind, to whatever nation they might belong."

Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," a poem at the Statue of Liberty, 1883

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Lyndon B. Johnson, upon signing the 1965 immigration act, October 3, 1965

"The land flourished because it was fed from so many sources—because it was nourished by so many cultures and traditions and peoples."

Mary Bray Pipher, psychologist and author, in The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come to Our Town, *2002*

"People come here penniless but not cultureless. They bring us gifts. We can synthesize the best of our traditions with the best of theirs. We can teach and learn from each other to produce a better America."

Jose Antonio Vargas, an undocumented journalist and activist, in the New York Times, *June 22, 2011*

"I decided then that I could never give anyone reason to doubt I was an American. I convinced myself that if I worked enough, if I achieved enough, I would be rewarded with citizenship.... I've tried.... On the surface, I've created a good life. I've lived the American dream. But I am still an undocumented immigrant.... This is my home. Yet even though I think of myself as an American and consider America my country, my country doesn't think of me as one of its own."

Dillon Burroughs, Evangelical Christian U.S. author, January 4, 2016

"God's love for others does not stop at the border; neither should ours."

Jean Montrevil, an activist, who was deported from the United States to Haiti after living in the country for more than thirty years, in a January 2018 interview

"I have volunteered, and I work and take care of my kids. I pay taxes every year. I did everything right. Everything they asked me to do, I have done it. So why target me now?"

Option 2: Restrict Immigration

The world is changing. War, terrorism, hunger, and disease plague an ever-growing portion of humanity. Protecting the United States from the economic, security, and cultural threats posed by outsiders must be the country's first priority. The United States is a strong country militarily and economically, but it cannot solve the world's problems. As the planet's population soars from more than seven billion today to an estimated ten billion by the year 2050, the United States must recognize that it can do little to end the misery that haunts much of the world. Meanwhile, the forces of economic change have left millions of U.S. citizens struggling to keep up, and the growing threat from Muslim terrorists must not be ignored. At a time when protecting the security, economy, and culture of the country is crucial, the United States cannot afford to keep the door open every year to roughly one million newcomers.

The world's disadvantaged people cannot be blamed for wanting to enter the United States. Many of them lead difficult lives and face hardship, hunger, and violence. But the United States has already given too much. The United States also has a duty to stop the senseless influx of immigrants, undocumented people, and refugees who may bring with them their foreign or even anti-U.S. religions, cultures, and ideologies. The United States should drastically reduce the number of immigrants it accepts and commit the resources necessary to take control of U.S. borders and prevent terrorism. It is time to focus on what is best for the citizens of the United States.

Option 2 is based on the following beliefs

- By depending on government resources for education and healthcare, immigrants divert financial resources that should be used to benefit U.S. citizens.
- Although the United States is a country of immigrants, high levels of immigration of people who do not speak English, have different values, practice Islam, and do not want to assimilate threaten U.S. stability and prosperity.
- High levels of immigration deprive low-wage workers in the United States of opportunities for economic advancement.
- Immigration is a threat to U.S. security and safety. In particular, people from war-torn, Muslim-majority countries might hold beliefs and practice religions that threaten the security of people in the United States.

What policies should we pursue?

- Reduce the number of immigration visas awarded annually.
- Focus on providing U.S. citizens, not immigrants, with the skills and education they need to contribute to the U.S. economy and lead prosperous lives.
- Strengthen border control by increasing the number of Border Patrol agents, constructing impassable barriers at major crossing points along the U.S.-Mexico border, and swiftly deporting undocumented people.
- Deny entry to all Muslim immigrants, including refugees, until international Muslim terror organizations are no longer a threat.
- End the policy of granting automatic citizenship to the U.S.-born children of non-citizens.
- Deny education, healthcare, and other social services to undocumented immigrants.

From the Record

Benjamin Franklin, "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.," 1751

"Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion."

John Jay, first chief justice of the Supreme Court, speaking about Catholic immigration

"We should build a wall of brass around the country."

Theodore Roosevelt, in an address to the Knights of Columbus, October 12, 1915

"There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism.... The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities."

Samuel Gompers, president, American Federation of Labor, April 28, 1921

"So many immigrants coming into this country will break down the standard of living of our people. Shutting out from our shores the poor of other nations and races is caused by the law of necessity and self-protection consequent upon our industrial system."

Wayne Lutton, an anti-immigration activist, at a Council of Conservative Citizens conference, 1999

"We are the real Americans, not the Hmong, not Latinos, not the Siberian Americans. The native Americans are not real Americans, they came from Siberia.... We are the descendants of the real Americans."

Presidential candidate Donald J. Trump, in a written statement, December 7, 2015

"Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on. According to Pew Research, among others, there is great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population."

President Donald J. Trump, in a tweet, January 16, 2018

"We must have Security at our VERY DANGEROUS SOUTHERN BORDER, and we must have a great WALL to help protect us, and to help stop the massive inflow of drugs pouring into our country!"

Option 3: Admit the Talent We Need

Every country has the right to promote its national interests. The United States should be no different. U.S. immigration policy should be designed to serve the country's economic and social needs, not to solve the world's problems. The United States cannot afford to admit hundreds of thousands of newcomers every year who will be a burden on society. The United States must ensure that its immigration policy strengthens the economy and, by doing so, improves the livelihoods of U.S. citizens.

Facing a globalizing world, a demanding global marketplace, and the relentless pace of technological change, the United States must implement an immigration policy that boosts its international competitiveness while also protecting the domestic economy. To spur U.S. high-tech industries forward, the United States should open its doors to scientists and engineers from abroad. To help U.S. factories, farms, and service industries hold down costs, the United States should allow a limited number of foreigners to work temporarily in low-wage jobs. Simultaneously, it must discourage undocumented immigration by restricting social services and increasing deportations. The United States should also recognize that it cannot be the savior of the world's growing refugee population. It must instead favor those with the education and skills to help our economy. By forging ahead with a realistic, long-term strategy, immigration policy can work for the United States.

Option 3 is based on the following beliefs

- Strengthening the U.S. economy should be the guiding principle underlying U.S. immigration policy.
- Maintaining the U.S. economy's competitive edge is essential to the well-being of its people.
- Immigrants with knowledge or experience in high-tech fields bring the most value to the U.S. economy.
- Highly educated immigrants are most likely to assimilate easily and will not require support or social services.

What policies should we pursue?

- Increase the number of immigration visas awarded annually for skilled workers and their families, making the advancement of science and technology the top priority in guiding immigration policy.
- Reduce total annual immigration, including refugees, and make adjustments to reflect economic conditions. (During an economic downturn, the number of immigration visas should be decreased, while during an economic expansion, the number should be increased.)
- Allow a limited number of foreigners to work temporarily in the United States in a guest worker program for agriculture and other industries facing labor shortages.
- Offer scholarships to international graduate students in science, engineering, and other high-tech fields, provided they will work in the United States for at least five years after graduating.
- Increase border security along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Deny education, healthcare, and other social services to undocumented immigrants.

From the Record

James Madison, in a Congressional debate on naturalization, 1790

"Those who acquire the rights of citizenship, without adding to the strength or wealth of the community are not the people we are in want of."

Jack Kemp, former vice presidential candidate and senator, October 24, 1996

"We are going to make sure that America is open to legal immigration because that is the wealth and the talent and the entrepreneurial skills for the twenty-first century."

President George W. Bush, quoted in the Iowa Gazette, *January 6, 2000*

"We ought to increase legal immigration for our country's advantage. The high-tech world we are now dominating is dependent on educated folks, but we're short...of workers. It is to our nation's advantage to encourage high-powered, smart people to come into our country."

Economist Alan Greenspan, paraphrased in the Wall Street Journal, *August 18, 2008*

"The only sustainable way to increase demand for vacant houses is to spur the formation of new households. Admitting more skilled immigrants, who tend to earn enough to buy homes, would accomplish that while paying other dividends to the U.S. economy."

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook founder and chief executive officer, April 10, 2013

"In a knowledge economy, the most important resources are the talented people we educate and attract to our country. A knowledge economy can scale further, create better jobs and provide a higher quality of living for everyone in our nation.... Why do we offer so few H-1B visas for talented specialists that the supply runs out within days of becoming available each year, even though we know each of these jobs will create two or three more American jobs in return? Why don't we let entrepreneurs move here when they have what it takes to start companies that will create even more jobs?"

Senator Marco Rubio, during a Republican presidential debate, October 28, 2015

"Today we have a legal immigration system for permanent residency that is largely based on whether you have a relative living here.... [But] we have a very different economy. Our legal immigration system from now on has to be merit-based. It has to be based on what skills you have, what you can contribute economically...."

President Donald J. Trump, in a tweet, January 14, 2018

"I, as President, want people coming into our Country who are going to help us become strong and great again, people coming in through a system based on MERIT...."

Option 4: Make Emigration Unnecessary

The people of the world are on the move. Population growth, the spread of war and violence, fears of persecution, and the age-old curses of hunger, poverty, and disease drive people from their homes. The United States is the destination of choice for many of these people. But opening our doors to large-scale immigration causes problems here and abroad. It overburdens schools and the healthcare system. It keeps wages low. It also drains poor countries of many of their most educated, highly skilled workers. This "brain drain" only makes it harder for poorer countries to meet the needs of their own populations. The United States must lead the international community in solving the problems that cause people to leave their countries.

The United States should work with the international community to strengthen economies and end conflicts worldwide. It should also create incentives for the best and brightest to stay where they are and contribute their skills to improve conditions in their own countries. By improving living standards for the world's disadvantaged, the United States can reduce the forces that drive immigrants to its borders. This process will take time. Humanitarian crises continue to create refugees. The United States must welcome refugees in need and strengthen humanitarian efforts throughout the globe. Eventually, some immigrants will return to their home countries. For others with roots in the United States, there must be a path to citizenship so they can fully contribute to the country moving forward.

Option 4 is based on the following beliefs

- Globalization means that problems affecting other countries are U.S. problems as well.
- The root causes of immigration are poverty, violence, and a lack of access to social services. By developing well-crafted programs of foreign aid and trade benefits, the United States can help people in poor and war-torn countries improve their lives without migrating abroad.
- While the United States has an obligation to reduce suffering wherever possible, the country's primary responsibility is to the well-being of those at home. The United States cannot continue to absorb an endless stream of immigrants.
- Assimilation of poor people who do not speak English or who do not have desired skills takes time and financial resources that should instead go to meet U.S. citizens' needs.

What policies should we pursue?

- Expand foreign aid and trade benefits to help governments in poorer countries to strengthen their economies. Do not engage in foreign policy that will lead to increased violence, poverty, and disempowerment of people abroad.
- Work with other wealthy countries to coordinate the resettlement of existing refugees and prevent future refugee crises.
- Apply consistent, humane standards in granting political asylum to refugees, rather than mold refugee policy to suit political purposes.
- Gradually reduce the number of immigration visas awarded annually.
- Improve conditions in undocumented immigrants' countries of origin to discourage undocumented immigration and to encourage the departure of undocumented immigrants from the United States.

From the Record

President Bill Clinton, at the signing of NAFTA, September 14, 1993

"And as the benefits of economic growth are spread in Mexico to working people, what will happen? They'll have more disposable income to buy more American products, and there will be less illegal immigration because more Mexicans will be able to support their children by staying home. This is a very important thing."

Pramila Jayapal, executive director of OneAmerica, speaking at the Urban Poverty Forum in Seattle, February 13, 2011

"NAFTA gave the U.S. maximum access to Mexican resources and markets. We conceded very little to Mexico....Farm workers tried to make a living on their small pieces of land just as their families had done for centuries, but they found that the rules of the game had been changed.... What would you do if you could no longer feed your family? What would you do if your country's economy has just been destroyed by a neighboring country to the north and now their economy was booming and there were jobs there that needed more and more agricultural workers because their own workers were moving away from that kind of labor in the fields? What would you do if your wife was sick, or your children could not get an education where you were anymore?... So join us in bringing all of us together so we don't fight against each other but instead, fight against corporations and against government regulations that keep people in poverty all around the world and here in the U.S."

Senator Marco Rubio, in an interview with Fox News Sunday, *August 3, 2014*

"We have an unsustainable situation on the border. The only way to address that is to address the root causes: a combination of violence, instability, and poverty in Central America."

Vice President Joe Biden, December 18, 2015

"And as we were reminded in the summer of 2014 when 50,000 unaccompanied children risked their lives to escape crime, corruption, violence and poverty to find their way to our southwestern border—the security and prosperity of Central America are inextricably linked with our own.... [T]his decision by Congress to invest $750 million in Central America demonstrates that we honor our commitments and believe in a future where the Western Hemisphere is middle class, democratic, and secure."

Noam Chomsky, academic and activist, March 2016

"Now, where are [undocumented immigrants] fleeing from? Mostly from Central America, where they're fleeing from the results of our policies."

Jorge Ramos, Mexican American journalist and author, July 6, 2016

"I didn't want to be an immigrant. I was forced to be an immigrant. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French writer, said that the powerful and the happy never go into exile. He was right."

Adriana Beltrán, in a WOLA (a human rights organization) article, June 27, 2018

"Given the urgency of the humanitarian crisis at the border, Vice President Pence and Secretary Nielsen ought to focus on the root causes of migration, including the violence and the corruption that undermines the prospects for people to live safely at home...."

Ruth Chojnacki, letter to the editor in the New York Times, *June 28, 2018*

"To punish migrants for protecting their children from social violence seeded by American foreign policy ignores our own historical complicity in forcing their decision to leave their broken societies. Redirecting billions of tax dollars intended to secure our borders toward programs to stabilize these societies would not only fulfill our moral responsibility to repair the damage we have done but also give Central Americans reason to have hope for and remain in their homelands."

Supplementary Resources

Books

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Camacho, Alicia Schmidt. *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.* New York: New York University Press, 2008.

DeSipio, Louis and Rodolfo O. de la Garza. *Immigration in the Twenty-First Century: Making Americans, Remaking America.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015.

Espiritu, Yen Le. *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refugees.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014.

FitzGerald, David Scott and David Cook-Martín. *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Gonzales, Roberto G. *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015.

Lee, Erika. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Lee, Robert G. and Wanni W. Anderson. *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Stern, Alexandra Minna. *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015.

White, Michael J. and Jennifer E. Glick. *Achieving Anew: How New Immigrants Do in American Schools, Jobs, and Neighborhoods.* New York: Russell Sage, 2009.

Zolberg, Aristide D. *A Nation By Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Online Resources

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services <www.ucis.gov> A U.S. government website that offers statistics and information about government policy.

National Immigration Forum <http://www.immigrationforum.org> An immigration rights organization that advocates for public policies that welcome immigrants and refugees.

Pew Research Center <http://pewresearch.org/topics/immigration/> Links to articles, statistics, and public opinion polls on the topic of immigration.

Southern Poverty Law Center Hatewatch <www.splcenter.org/hatewatch> Reports, articles, profiles, and graphics discussing groups that espouse hate in the United States—including anti-immigration and Islamophobic groups.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) <www.unhcr.org> Reports, statistics, photos, and videos about the UNHCR and refugee experiences.

The U.S Committee for Refugees <https://www.refugees.org/> Reports and statistics from a refugee advocacy organization.