

The background of the page is a blue-tinted image of the United States flag, showing the stars and stripes. The text is overlaid on this background.

CHAPTER
5

**IMMIGRATION
AND
BORDER
SECURITY**

IDEA 6

America is a nation of laws, so we must immediately regain control of our borders and stop releasing migrants who enter America illegally into the country.

America's border security problem can be described simply: it's too easy for unauthorized individuals to sneak across the border and too easy for migrants to claim asylum when they don't qualify for it.

In fiscal year 2022, the US Border Patrol encountered over 2.3 million migrants trying to illegally cross the US-Mexico border. That's the most on record. That same year, our Border Patrol:

- *Encountered 6,000 people every day trying to cross our border illegally.*
- *Seized over 14,000 pounds of fentanyl, a drug that's killing more Americans every year than guns and car crashes combined.*
- *Fielded a record-breaking 250,000 requests for asylum.*

Our immigration system is a disaster that is straining US communities and creating desperate and unsafe conditions for migrants coming to America. The only ones who benefit from America's immigration status quo are the drug cartels that make billions each year trafficking people and lethal drugs across our border.

To secure the border, America needs much more manpower. There are fewer than 17,000 agents stationed on the 1,954-mile-long US-Mexico border. That means each mile of the border, on average, has fewer than nine Border Patrol agents. Protecting our border also requires better security technology like cameras and sensors, improved data sharing between agencies, and even physical fortifications in some areas.

We also need to reform our broken asylum system. It is being abused by migrants who don't meet the legal requirements for asylum, which according to US law is a "well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

About 55 percent of asylum seekers during President Biden's tenure have had their claims denied for not meeting those standards, but most people who claim asylum are released into the US and told to wait for a court hearing that takes, on average, over four years to happen. Many never show up for their eventual day in court.

This isn't working for Americans and it certainly isn't working for the asylum seekers, as they aren't authorized to work in America while waiting for a hearing. That forces them into the underground economy where they aren't paying taxes and can be exploited by unethical employers.

Meanwhile, there are nearly 790,000 pending asylum cases and only 650 immigration judges hearing those cases. Just to clear the existing backlog, each judge would have to decide over 1,200 cases. That's a tall order considering the average judge completed only 87 cases in fiscal year 2022.

So America needs more immigration judges, but we also need them dealing with fewer cases. That's why the commonsense majority approves of asylum process changes like former President Trump's so-called Remain in Mexico policy or President Biden's similar rule, which requires most asylum seekers to wait outside the US until a judge hears their case.

IDEA 7

America is also a nation of immigrants, so we should create a path to citizenship for the Dreamers and a plan to attract more legal immigrants, because more hardworking taxpayers means lower inflation and faster economic growth.

Most of us have read the famous inscription on the Statue of Liberty that says America has always welcomed “your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

Those beautiful words speak to why so many immigrants want to come to America and to the opportunities our country can provide for them. But we sometimes forget how much immigrants do for all the Americans who are already here.

The vast majority of immigrants come here to work and to pursue the American Dream. They do the essential jobs that must be done on our farms, in our factories, and in our communities. And they bring an unrivaled spirit of entrepreneurship: almost half of America’s Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children, and immigrants are twice as likely to start a new business as a native-born American.

This is why it is so important for our next president and Congress to address immigration in two ways.

ATTRACT MORE LEGAL IMMIGRANTS WHO WILL BE HARDWORKING TAXPAYERS

America doesn't have enough people to do the work that needs to be done. As of April 2023, there were nearly twice as many unfilled jobs (10.1 million) as there were in 2015. Ninety-one percent of construction firms had projects delayed due to worker shortages according to a 2022 poll by the Association of General Contractors, while farmers are growing less and seeing more crops die without enough workers to help.

More unfilled jobs are bad for businesses and consumers: lower output, higher costs, more inflation, longer wait times.

The pandemic exacerbated these problems, but they've been building for a long time:

- *The labor force participation rate—the proportion of the working-age population that's either employed or seeking a job—plateaued in the 1990s and has trended downward since then. As of May 2023, the participation rate stands at 62.5 percent—a low not seen since the 1970s.*
- *It will only get more challenging from here because:*
 - *Our population is aging. By 2040, one in five Americans is projected to be over 65 years old. Soon, there will be too few taxpayers taking care of too many Social Security and Medicare recipients.*
 - *Our population could soon start shrinking. American women are having too few children, on average, to keep the population—and workforce—growing.*

America remains the number-one dream destination for immigrants from across the world, and that is a huge advantage for us over countries like China, which faces its own aging workforce, but foreign workers have little interest in moving there.

We should double down on attracting hard workers from around the world to join the American experiment and contribute to our world-class economy.

PROVIDE A PATH TO CITIZENSHIP FOR THE DREAMERS

Across America, there are roughly two million people who were brought to the US illegally as children by their parents.

They're called Dreamers, and most American citizens think they're every bit as American as someone who was born here.

- *The median Dreamer is 24 years old and has been here since they were six years old.*
- *More than 95 percent of Dreamers attend or graduated from an American high school, 250,000 are in college, and hundreds if not thousands have served in our armed forces.*
- *Nine in 10 Dreamers speak only English or speak it well or very well.*
- *Thirty thousand are health-care workers—that's enough to staff more than 100 average-sized Veterans Affairs health facilities.*

For years, Dreamers have lived in limbo because Congress hasn't created a permanent path for them to stay here or become citizens, which has forced successive White Houses and the federal courts to throw together ad hoc solutions that let them stay temporarily.

It's just common sense that the White House and Congress should pass legislation that lets Dreamers stay permanently. But American citizenship is a privilege, not a right, so to become a citizen, Dreamers should need to:

- *Have a clean criminal record.*
- *Be pursuing an education, working, or serving in the military.*
- *Enter a process that takes five years before they can apply for citizenship.*