

Memorandum for the President
Subject: Immigration Policy

Issue for Decision: Whether such decisions as those outlined in the Executive orders signed January 25th, 2017 and the subsequent announcement to end the “Catch and Release” policy followed by the supplemental implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols or “MPP” and the decreased number of refugees allowed in the United States should continue.

Overview: On January 25, 2017, two Executive Orders entitled “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States” and “Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements” were signed. These ordered the construction of a border wall between the United States and Mexico and called for an expanded focus on the deportation of illegal aliens as well as increased the number of Border Patrol Agents, ICE agents, construction of detainee facilities and immigrant lawyers at these sites. They also set a limitation on federal aid to “sanctuary cities.” Subsequently, the Acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Kevin McAleenan, announced on September 23rd, 2019 the end of the “Catch and Release” policy for “family units” the following week. As is known, this policy allowed families detained at the border to be released into the United States while their legal eligibility to remain in the United States was decided. This was accompanied by a decision to require families coming across the border to claim asylum in a “Third Country” before coming to the United States. The administration has also limited the number of refugees allowed from 30,000 last year down to 18,000 for the next fiscal year.

Policy Options:

Option 1: Maintain a strong hard-line view of the Executive orders and subsequent policies

Since these orders were decreed to make the United State’s borders more secure, this administration could continue to act in accordance with the Executive orders issued to address the increased number of immigrants to the United States and efforts to increase border security.

Option 2: Soften hard-line policies on immigration

While there are 44.5 million immigrants in the United States, the rate of growth has decreased. Only 21% of these immigrants arrived in the U.S during or after 2010 compared to 26% between 2000 and 2009 and 31% before 1990. In addition, these Executive orders will cost the administration billions of dollars. The construction of the detainee centers is approximated to cost tens of millions of dollars. The increase of ICE agents as laid out in the Executive order is estimated to cost \$3.9 billion. This does not account for the additional costs of immigration

lawyers or Border Patrol Agents. The mission to have Mexico pay for the wall has increased tensions between our two countries and the recently lowered cap on refugees has extended these tensions to other European countries as the number of refugees has decreased in the United States during a time where the number world-wide is at its highest.

By accepting these immigrants and refugees, the economy could be stimulated. This is due, in part, to the rate at which immigrants and refugees are likely to become entrepreneurs. When compared to those born in the U.S, 9% are natural-born, 13% are refugees and 11.5% are immigrants. Furthermore, if refugees were allowed access to the same employment opportunities as other Americans, they could contribute approximately \$3.2 billion to the U.S GDP.

Recommendation: Many of these decisions, including the Executive order on Refugees, issued the same day as the orders above, have been challenged or blocked by the Supreme Court, the cost of these plans are extensive, and the reaction from U.S human rights groups has been poor. Therefore, I recommend that this administration pursue Option 2 and allow immigrants to remain in the United States while they await their court cases in addition to increasing the number of refugees allowed. By putting an end to the over 340 rapes, kidnappings, and other violent offenses against those returned to Mexico, the administration could appeal to Community-based organizations such as those partnering with NGOs to handle the influx of immigrants as these methods have proved more humane and cost-effective. By following this recommendation, the United States can begin to lead the way in humanitarian aid while easing the tensions between the United States, its international allies and domestic critics in addition to using the increased GDP as a way for the administration to focus on other goals with increased resources.

Celeste Leary