

Immigration Overview - 2017 vs. 2025

We what we experienced, and what to expect

1. Introduction and Context

- Brief overview of immigration policies during Trump's last administration, focusing on:
 - Increased detentions and deportations.
 - Policies targeting sanctuary cities and counties.
 - Impacts on Bucks County immigrant communities.
- The human toll: family separations, fear, and community destabilization.

2. Key Acronyms and Definitions

- **ICE:** Immigration and Customs Enforcement – responsible for enforcing immigration laws.
- **CBP:** Customs and Border Protection – oversees border security and customs.
- Departments under ICE responsible for detention:
 - **ERO:** Enforcement and Removal Operations – manages detention and deportation.
 - **HSI:** Homeland Security Investigations – focuses on criminal investigations involving immigration.
- **DHS:** Department of Homeland Security – umbrella agency for ICE and CBP.

3. What Happened here, and what We Did in Response

- Formation of Immigrant Rights Action (IRA):
 - Grassroots response to combat deportations and support immigrant communities.
 - Sharing of stories
- Key areas of action:
 - **Legal Defense Fund:** Providing \$500 to detained people allowing them to quickly engage an attorney and avoid expedited removal.
 - **Legislative Advocacy:** Lobbying for pro-immigrant policies and opposing harmful legislation.
 - **Community Outreach and Trainings:** Educating communities about their rights and fostering solidarity.
 - **Legal Support:** Partnering with attorneys to provide free or low-cost legal assistance.
 - **Employer Education:** Engaging businesses to understand and respect immigrant rights in the workplace.

4. Detention Under Trump's Last Administration vs. Current Proposals

- **Trump's Last Administration:**
 - Expansion of private detention facilities.
 - Family separation at the border.
 - Use of public charge rule to deter legal immigration.
 - Grants for local law enforcement agencies that deputized officers as ICE agents.

Proposed Now

- **Expansion of Private Detention Centers:** Significant growth in the use of private facilities to detain immigrants.
- **Return of Family Detention:** Plans to reinstate policies that detain entire families, including children, in harsh conditions.
- **National Guard Deployment:** Federalizing state National Guard personnel for immigration enforcement, including arrests in homes and workplaces, even against the will of local officials and communities.
- **Increased Reliance on Local Authorities:** Deputizing local police and county jail personnel to arrest and identify immigrants, granting them "immunity" for civil rights violations. Threatening to withhold funding from departments that do not cooperate.
- **Sweeps and Workplace Raids:** Authorizing mass arrests during public sweeps and workplace raids, targeting scores of undocumented immigrants.
- **Extremist Legal Theories:** Potential invocation of the *Alien Enemies Act* to bypass standard deportation procedures, undermining constitutional protections.
- **Expansion of Expedited Removal:** Widening the use of fast-track deportations within the U.S. interior, despite constitutional concerns.
- **State-Led Deportation Systems:** Encouraging states to create independent deportation systems, as seen with Texas's SB 4 law.
- **Mass Detention Camps:** Proposals for vast detention camps to accommodate the large-scale arrests and detentions. Persons awaiting hearings could be detained for years.
- **Fund Diversions:** Redirecting funds from other purposes to build these detention camps, akin to how border wall construction was financed.
- **Attack on Birthright Citizenship:** Plans to challenge and potentially revoke citizenship for children born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrants.
- **Attack on Naturalized Citizenship:** Plans to reopening the 2017 "Office of Denaturalization"
- **Barring Undocumented Children from Schools:** Proposals to deny education access to undocumented children.
- **Family Separation:** Reimplementation of policies separating children from parents at the border.
- **Elimination of Legal Protections:** Targeting vulnerable groups like TPS holders, Dreamers, and refugees (e.g., Ukrainians, Afghans, Venezuelans), forcing them out of legal status or the country despite dire conditions in their home nations.

These proposals signal a severe rollback of protections and constitutional guarantees for immigrants, with broad implications for families, communities, and local governance.

5. Fact vs. Fiction About Immigration

- **Fiction:** Immigrants take jobs from Americans.
 - **Fact:** Immigrants contribute to economic growth and often take jobs that are hard to fill. Lack of immigrant labor in construction and food processing will increase the cost of housing and food.
- **Fiction:** Undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes.
 - **Fact:** Undocumented immigrants in the United States contribute significantly to the nation's tax revenue. In 2022, it was estimated that they paid approximately **\$97 billion in total taxes**. This includes:
 - **\$37.3 billion** to state and local governments, through sales, excise, property, and income taxes.
 - **\$34 billion** in federal payroll taxes, which includes \$25.6 billion to Social Security and \$6.4 billion to Medicare. These contributions fund programs from which undocumented immigrants typically do not benefit.
- **Fiction:** Immigrants are a threat to public safety.
 - **Fact:** Immigrants, including undocumented ones, have lower crime rates than native-born Americans. For example, undocumented immigrants in Texas were found to be 60% less likely to be convicted of crimes compared to native-born individuals. Similarly, a broader study spanning 150 years highlights that immigrants, regardless of their legal status, have always been less likely to be incarcerated than U.S.-born individuals, particularly in recent decades.