What Trump Means for Immigration

JANUARY 25, 2017

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Immigration policy changes were the centerpiece of President-Elect Trump's platform. On his campaign page Trump promised that if elected he would "immediately terminate President Obama's two illegal executive amnesties," and in a recent interview with *60 Minutes*, Trump explained that his administration will remove two to three million undocumented migrants, with a focus on those who are "criminal, have criminal records, [are] gang members, drug dealers."

Trump promises to repeal an Executive Order issued by President Obama in June 2012, often called DACA, which stands for Deferred Action to Childhood Arrivals. (Obama's second order was never implemented because of court action.) The current program offers relief from deportation for undocumented people who arrived in the United States before the age of 16 and have resided here since June 2007. The Obama order does not give legal status or lead to citizenship. Instead, it instructs. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to de-prioritize this group for deportation and allows those thus protected to work legally with a temporary work permit.

MOST UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS DO NOT HAVE CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

Federal law is clear: being in the United States without status is a civil infraction. For an immigrant to be categorized as a "criminal", he or she must do something other than simply being out of status that would lead to being arrested. The two to three million criminal immigrants Trump wants to deport do not exist because, as the Migration Policy Institute estimates, only 820,000 of the undocumented in the country have committed crimes.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC OPPOSES MASS DEPORTATION

According to Election Day exit polls, over 65 percent of voters believe that undocumented immigrants should be offered a path to U.S. legal status or citizenship. Only a minority of voters, somewhere between 19 and 25 percent, favor deporting undocumented residents back to their home countries. Public opinion has long been

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supportive of integrating undocumented immigrants, although many people do not realize this because the anti-immigrant sentiments held by a vocal minority are highly visible in the media.

IMMIGRANTS ARE EMBEDDED IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

Many undocumented immigrants live in "mixed-status" families that include both lawful permanent residents (people with green cards) and U.S. citizens. Approximately 4.1 million U.S. citizens under the age of 18 lived in mixed-status families in 2009-13. Deporting large numbers of people would mean ripping apart such families and their communities.

MASS DEPORTATION WOULD REQUIRE A MASSIVE EFFORT

The Department of Homeland Security primarily uses four methods to apprehend people, none of which could easily be ramped up to deport two to three million people or more.

- Cooperation between federal immigration agents and local law enforcement officials helps to identify immigrants who have been convicted of crimes other than simply being undocumented. More such collaboration might lead to the deportation of about 100,000 more people per year. But many local police forces are reluctant, because they learned in the 1990s and 2000s that this strategy can be expensive and counterproductive to their core mission of solving crimes and protecting all residents.

- Home raids carried out by National Fugitive Operation Teams yield few deportations relative to the large numbers of personnel they require to plan and execute raids. Many of those apprehended do not have criminal records.

- Public support for cracking down on employers through worksite raids has been, and remains, low. (In 2013, federal authorities arrested a mere 452 immigrants this way).

- Casting a wider net by expanding immigration checkpoints farther into the interior of the country is unlikely to lead to many criminal arrests.

MASS DEPORTATION WOULD HARM THE ECONOMY

- According to the Center for American Progress, mass deportation would cost an average of $10,070 per person, for a total cost to the country of $114 billion to remove 11.3 million people.

- According to the American Action Foundation, apprehending, detaining, legally processing, and physically returning 11.2 million people to their countries of origin would cost roughly $400 billion to $600 billion and take 20 years, while removing millions of workers and billions of dollars in assets from the economy and decreasing U.S. gross domestic product by two percent, by a full $1.6 trillion.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY:

"U.S. deportation policy does not stop unauthorized or criminal migration. Rather, its unintended consequence is to create circular migratory patterns within larger migration streams. It simply raises the human costs for migrants and their families."

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"Rural America has returned to the national spotlight. But the fact that immigrants and refugees

have revitalized small towns and rural areas is often overlooked. In Kansas, newcomers replenish farming and meatpacking jobs, open and sustain businesses, and take care of the elderly resident population. Here and elsewhere, immigration can help rural America thrive."

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"Federal policy is needed to secure immigrant labor as a resource for economic growth in labor-

intensive industries like service, construction, and landscaping, which immigrant workers, including undocumented ones, have helped to sustain. In Austin, Texas, scarcity for service and manual work is already apparent, and street signs have appeared advertising for "laborers."

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"Unfortunately, nativism and xenophobia are as American as apple pie. The fact that the nation

of immigrants has experienced ugly spasms before, though, does not make the present moment any less terrifying for all immigrants, whether undocumented or not."

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"Trump has promised to deport two to three million immigrants who have committed crimes.

Aside from the fact that these numbers are an exaggeration, it will be impossible to design a large-scale deportation program that only affects immigrants who have committed crimes. Any deportation program – even any threat of mass deportation – will have reverberating effects throughout immigrant communities."

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