

# Trump announces plan to cut legal immigration in half

Our reporter  
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The Trump administration escalated its pivot toward extreme right-wing elements on Wednesday by launching a major new legislative initiative directed against immigrants.

The administration's proposal would cut legal immigration in half by imposing a wealth- and education-based test to ensure that the poorest immigrants are kept out. It would separate families by preventing working class immigrants from petitioning to bring their family members into the United States through the current statutory processes. The proposal is being advanced in the Senate in a bill introduced by Republicans David Perdue of Georgia and Tom Cotton of Arkansas.

Defending the proposal, Trump said: "This competitive application process will favor applicants who can speak English, financially support themselves and their families and demonstrate skills that will contribute to our economy."

By blocking tens of thousands of immigrants legally present in the US from petitioning to bring their family members to the US, the Trump administration is signing the death warrants for many husbands, wives, parents, children and grandparents of legal permanent residents who will otherwise be unable to escape the poverty and war so prevalent in regions such as Central America and the Middle East. The decision will force others to undertake the journey illegally at the risk of meeting the same fate as the ten migrants who last week suffocated in a semi-truck trailer in San Antonio.

At a press conference announcing the proposal, Trump aide Stephen Miller sought to defend the administration's move with nativist demagoguery. He cynically blamed poor and working-class immigrants for "a shift in wealth from the working class to wealthier corporations and business," ignoring the fact

that the clique of oligarchs headed up by Trump is giving the corporations a blank check to ratchet up the exploitation of all workers, immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

In an exchange with CNN's Jim Acosta, Miller employed the thinly-veiled anti-Semitic language of the German Nazi Party when he denounced the news outlet for having a "cosmopolitan bias." The use of this term, whether a slip or intentional, is a signal that the White House is increasingly run by fascists.

The alt-right *Breitbart News* leapt on the remark, posting the dual banner headline: "Left freaks out at Trump's immigration overhaul" and "Wat? 'Cosmopolitan' elites claim only UK, Australian immigrants know English." The term "cosmopolitan" is widely used on openly fascist websites such as *Stormfront* to describe Jewish journalists.

In the last week, the Trump administration has moved to consolidate power in the hands of a cabal of trusted insiders largely independent of the Republican Party. The White House is working to establish a personalist regime in which the executive branch is controlled by a network comprised of fascist advisers, generals such as John Kelly, who last week replaced former Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus as White House chief of staff, and billionaire financial speculators.

Trump has stepped up his efforts to base his administration directly on the military and police, including a speech last Friday before an audience of Long Island, New York cops in which he urged his listeners to treat people "rough" as they were being arrested. The assembled police responded with chants of "USA! USA!"

In that speech, Trump justified his plans for rounding up immigrants by equating them with violent gang

members. He denounced MS-13, the Salvadoran gang founded in Los Angeles by migrants escaping the civil war in El Salvador. Borrowing from the playbook of the fascist president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, Trump called members of the gang “animals.”

The announcement of a new legislative effort against legal immigrants is an ominous warning that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is preparing to escalate the administration’s mass deportation plans. In February, the Associated Press announced that then-DHS Secretary Kelly was proposing to deploy 100,000 National Guard troops to carry out Trump’s January 25 executive order mandating a crackdown against immigrants, but the memo was never signed after a public backlash.

The administration’s employment of fascist terminology and its shift away from the Republican Party establishment toward the alt-right is an indication that the unsigned February DHS memo is back in play. This raises the specter of martial law and military-style round-ups of millions of immigrants. According to a February report by the *Los Angeles Times*, Trump’s January 25 order placed 8 million undocumented workers at risk of immediate deportation.

It is possible that the Trump administration’s Senate bill will draw support from sections of the Democratic Party. The Democrats recently announced their “Better Deal” agenda, dropping any reference to the defense of the rights of immigrants and other populations targeted by Trump, including LGBT people.

In a further sign the Democratic Party is orienting itself to Trump’s economic nationalism and social backwardness, the head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Ben Ray Lujan told the *Hill* Monday that “there is not a litmus test for Democratic candidates” on abortion rights. In recent weeks, key Democratic-aligned journalists such as the *Atlantic*’s Peter Beinart, CNN’s Fareed Zakaria and former Clinton aides Mark Penn and Andrew Stein have published articles demanding that the Democratic Party orient itself toward Trump’s anti-immigrant campaign.

Zakaria, himself an immigrant, wrote in a June 29 *Washington Post* column that Democrats “should take a position on immigration that is less absolutist and recognizes both the cultural and economic costs of large-scale immigration.” Penn and Stein wrote in a

July 6 *New York Times* op-ed that the Democrats lost in 2016 because voters “feel abandoned” by Democratic support for “policies offering more help to undocumented immigrants than to the heartland.”

Beinart wrote in the July/August edition of the *Atlantic* that “the next Democratic presidential candidate should say again and again that because Americans are one people, who must abide by one law, his or her goal is to reduce America’s undocumented population to zero.”

There are disagreements within the Democratic Party over whether and how rapidly the party can formally drop its support for a path to citizenship for some immigrants. But the fact that such reactionary, anti-immigrant proposals are being voiced within the party is proof that the Democrats will not halt Trump’s plans for mass deportations. Only the working class, uniting immigrant and native-born workers, can prevent mass deportations and defend the democratic right of workers to live and work in the country of their choice without fear of harassment or removal.



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