

Democrats green-light Trump's escalating war on immigrants

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31 March 2018

Without any opposition from the Democratic Party and little attention in the corporate media, President Donald Trump and his fascist advisors are quietly carrying out the most dramatic rightwing shift in US immigration policy in a century. They are laying the basis for mass roundups and the brutalization of hundreds of thousands of immigrants in an expanding network of internment camps nationwide.

The Trump administration announced a series of new policies on Thursday. The first policy change targets the poor and working class by blocking immigrants who have used a broad array of social programs from receiving legal permanent residency.

While immigrants were previously denied permanent residency if they had used *cash* programs, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced a change on Thursday that adds almost all forms of government support to the list of banned services, including noncash programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), food programs for women and infants (WIC), school lunches, housing and heating assistance, health care subsidies, and the earned income tax credit, which is used by about 20 percent of the population.

Any immigrant who uses a social program will be labeled a "public charge" and found ineligible for legal status. Immigrant parents will be penalized even if their US citizen children use social programs to which they are legally entitled.

As a result of this policy change, hundreds of thousands or millions of workers will go without food, health care, housing and other basic needs for fear of deportation. The Trump administration's strategy is to create a permanent underclass of deeply impoverished people who can be scapegoated for society's ills.

The administration also announced Thursday that it

will require all visa applicants to submit their social media records dating back five years to determine if they are admissible for entry to the US. This policy will allow immigration officials to deny visas to applicants with left-wing political opinions.

The administration also announced plans last week to include a question on the 2020 US census requiring people to state whether they are citizens. This change will give the police, military and deportation agencies a map of where undocumented people live, raising the specter of mass, coordinated raids to round up immigrants.

The administration is also enacting a series of policy changes that systematize abuse in the immigration detention system. On Thursday, ICE announced that it will detain pregnant immigrants captured by ICE or Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents.

Last fall, the Trump administration fought to deny detained immigrants access to abortion, even in cases where the immigrant was raped by smugglers. According to official counts, 506 pregnant women have been detained since December 2017. The administration has also split detained families by moving immigrant parents and children to different facilities.

Trump has unleashed fascist elements within ICE and CBP who are engaged in widespread mistreatment of detained immigrants. In December, ICE shackled 92 Somalis together by their wrists, legs and waists on a deportation flight for over 40 hours, forcing them to urinate on themselves. According to a March 4 report in the *Intercept*, ICE agents beat and threatened the immigrants. When the Somali government refused to accept the deportees, agents brought the immigrants back to immigration detention centers in Florida and continued to beat them, calling them "nigger" and

“boy” and promising to “send you back to the jungle.”

A recent report by a group of nonprofits documented routine beatings and sexual abuse of immigrants at a detention center in West Texas. One immigrant said he was “placed in solitary confinement, where I was forced to lie face down on the floor with my hands handcuffed behind my back while I was kicked repeatedly in the ribs by the warden...When I told him, ‘I’ll get a lawyer to sue you,’ the warden responded, ‘We’ve got enough money.’”

When *World Socialist Web Site* reporters visited the West Texas Detention Facility, a local business owner boasted that local police “let us shoot immigrants and roll their bodies into the riverbed.”

The US Supreme Court ruled this year that immigrants have no right to bail, meaning thousands more will face indefinite detention in these hellholes.

In March, Democrats joined Republicans in passing a \$1.3 trillion spending bill that strengthens the framework for mass detention and deportation, including:

- A 10 percent (\$641 million) increase in funds for ICE.

- Granting the Trump administration the right to allocate funds to expand the number of beds at immigrant detention centers “as necessary to ensure the detention of aliens prioritized for removal.”

- \$1.6 billion for wall construction and border militarization, including \$251 million to build a *second* wall in San Diego and \$263 million for “planning, design and technology” for futuristic militarized walls.

- Hiring hundreds more CBP agents.

Democrats voted for the bill 39-8 in the Senate, compared to Republicans who barely supported it (voting 25-23), on the grounds that it was not sufficiently reactionary.

The deal included no protection for the 1.8 million people eligible for protection from deportation under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Though the program expired on March 5, beneficiaries can renew their DACA protections while litigation plays out in the federal courts.

Democrats explicitly refused to include DACA as a demand in the budget negotiations. Since March 6, the day after DACA’s expiration, the Democrats have made a deliberate decision to ignore the issue. In the hundreds of Twitter posts by Democratic leaders

Charles Schumer, Nancy Pelosi, Barack Obama, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Joe Biden since March 6, only two tweets reference DACA.

The Democrats’ claims to support immigrants are a sham. The Democratic Party expressed its real priorities during the budget negotiations in February in a letter to the Republican leadership signed by Pelosi, Schumer, Steny Hoyer and others. Referring to the “Russian president and his operatives,” the Democrats’ letter claimed, “The most essential elements of America’s democracy are under attack by a foreign adversary and Congress must respond immediately.”

The Democrats demanded \$300 million for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) “to counter the influence of hostile foreign actors operating in the US, especially Russian operatives operating on our social media platforms”—in other words, to censor the Internet and ban left-wing and antiwar information and opinions.



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