

NEWS ARTICLES ON KEY ISSUES – JUNE 11, 2020

LATEST STATISTICS AND NEWS

NUMBER OF CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES AMONG ICE STAFF AND DETAINED IMMIGRANTS

By U.S. Immigration And Customs Enforcement – June 8, 2020

As of **May 30, 2020**, the total detained population is: **25,421**¹. *There have been 838 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among those in ICE custody as of June 7, 2020*². *To date, there have been 5,096 total detainees tested.*

COVID-19 ICE Detainee Statistics by Facility as of June 7, 2020

Custody/AOR/Facility	Confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring	Detainee deaths ³	Total confirmed COVID-19 cases ⁴
Atlanta Field Office			
Folkston ICE Processing Center	4	0	4
Irwin County Detention Center	6	0	7
Stewart Detention Center	21	1	26
Boston Field Office			
Bristol County Detention Center	1	0	1
Franklin County House of Corrections	2	0	2
Strafford County Corrections	2	0	2
Wyatt Detention Center	1	0	2
Buffalo Field Office			
Buffalo (Batavia) Service Processing Center	0	0	49
Chicago Field Office			
Lincoln County Detention Center	1	0	1
Pulaski County Detention Center	34	0	44
Dallas Field Office			
Bluebonnet Detention Facility	109	0	133
Johnson County Law Enforcement Center	1	0	1
Prairieland Detention Facility	16	0	43
Rolling Plains Detention Center	36	0	41
Denver Field Office			
Aurora Contract Detention Facility	9	0	12
Detroit Field Office			
Calhoun County Correctional Center	3	0	5
Morrow County Correctional Facility	26	0	48
Saint Clair County Jail	5	0	10
El Paso Field Office			
El Paso Service Processing Center	74	0	82
Otero County Processing Center	27	0	92
Torrance County Detention Center	15	0	17

COVID-19 ICE Detainee Statistics by Facility as of June 7, 2020

Custody/AOR/Facility	Confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring	Detainee deaths³	Total confirmed COVID-19 cases⁴
Houston Field Office			
Houston Contract Detention Facility	8	0	82
IAH Polk Adult Detention Facility	0	0	16
Joe Corley Detention Center	10	0	41
Montgomery Processing Center (Houston)	46	0	53
Los Angeles Field Office			
Adelanto ICE Processing Center	3	0	3
Miami Field Office			
Broward Transitional Center	19	0	21
Glades County Detention Center	60	0	61
Krome North Service Processing Center	7	0	23
Newark Field Office			
Elizabeth Detention Center	0	0	18
Essex County Jail	7	0	8
New Orleans Field Office			
Adams County Correctional Center	17	0	31
Alexandria Staging Facility	58	0	58
Catahoula Correctional Center	33	0	53
Etowah County Jail	0	0	1
LaSalle ICE Processing Center - Jena	0	0	11
LaSalle ICE Processing Center - Olla	5	0	5
Pine Prairie ICE Processing Center	0	0	30
Richwood Correctional Center	0	0	65
River Correctional Center	1	0	2
Winn Correctional Center	46	0	115
New York City Field Office			
Bergen County Jail	0	0	2
Hudson County Jail	5	0	14
Philadelphia Field Office			
Pike County Correctional Facility	8	0	22
York County Prison	0	0	1
Phoenix Field Office			
Eloy Federal Contract Facility	12	0	13
Florence Detention Center	6	0	18
La Palma Correctional Facility	14	0	78

COVID-19 ICE Detainee Statistics by Facility as of June 7, 2020

Custody/AOR/Facility	Confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring	Detainee deaths³	Total confirmed COVID-19 cases⁴
Salt Lake City Field Office			
Nevada Southern Detention Center	1	0	1
San Antonio Field Office			
Port Isabel Detention Center	7	0	8
South Texas ICE Processing Center (Pearsall)	39	0	44
Webb County Detention Center (CCA)	0	0	1
San Diego Field Office			
Imperial Regional Detention Facility	2	0	2
Otay Mesa Detention Center (San Diego CDF)	12	1	162
San Luis Regional Detention Center	5	0	5
Seattle Field Office			
Tacoma ICE Processing Center	1	0	2
St. Paul Field Office			
Polk County Jail	10	0	11
Washington D.C. Field Office			
Caroline Detention Facility	0	0	3
Immigration Centers of America - Farmville	3	0	3
TOTAL	838	2	1,709

¹ ICE's FY 2019 Average Daily Population was 50,165.

² "Currently under isolation or monitoring" includes detainees who tested positive for COVID-19 and are currently in ICE custody under isolation or monitoring. This number excludes detainees who previously tested positive for COVID-19 and were either returned to the general population after a discontinuation of medical monitoring/isolation or are no longer in ICE custody.

³ "Detainee deaths" includes detainees who have died after testing positive for COVID-19 while in ICE custody; COVID-19 may not be the official cause of death.

⁴ "Total confirmed COVID-19 cases" is the cumulative total of detainees who have tested positive for COVID-19 while in ICE custody since testing began in February 2020. ***Data Last Reviewed/Updated: 06/08/2020

There have been 45 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among ICE employees working in ICE detention facilities.

- 1 at Adelanto ICE Processing Center (Adelanto, CA)
- 15 at Alexandria Staging Facility (Alexandria, LA)
- 2 at Aurora Contract Detention Facility (Aurora, CO)
- 1 in Bergen County Jail (Hackensack, NJ)
- 1 at Butler County Jail (Hamilton, OH)
- 1 at El Paso Processing Center (El Paso, TX)
- 2 at Elizabeth Contract Detention Facility (Elizabeth, NJ)
- 1 at Eloy Detention Center (Eloy, AZ)
- 1 at Essex County Correctional Facility (Newark, NJ)
- 1 at Florence Correctional Center (Florence, AZ)
- 2 at Houston Contract Detention Facility (Houston, TX)
- 1 at Hudson County Jail (Kearny, NJ)
- 2 at La Salle ICE Processing Center (Jena, AL)
- 11 at Otay Mesa Detention Center (San Diego, CA)
- 2 at Stewart Detention Center (Lumpkin, GA)
- 1 at T. Don Hutto Residential Center (Taylor, TX)

There have been 130 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among ICE employees not assigned to detention facilities.

❖ Data Source: <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus>

NUMBER OF DEPORTATION FLIGHTS BY ICE AIR

By Tom Cartwright – *Witness at the Border* – June 5, 2020

There were a total of 73 flights from June 1 to June 5.

- Honduras (4)
 - Mexico (4)
 - Dominican (1)
 - Bahamas (1)
 - Guatemala (1)
 - 6 Deportation U.S. Connections
 - 9 Deportation Returns
 - 47 Shuffle flights in the U.S.
- ❖ Note: ICE Air does not disclose their flights. Flight listing gleaned from public flight information, knowledge of detention center locations, air charter services and historic patterns. In rare cases, there may be a flight missed, or include in error.
- ❖ Statistics Source: <https://www.witnessattheborder.org/posts/6520>

MIGRANTS IN MEXICO

CLINIC STRENGTHENS SAFETY MEASURES AGAINST COVID-19 FOR A CAMP OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

By Andrea Ano – *Latin Post* – May 18, 2020

- ❖ Due to the growing concerns of the congestion and lack of order in the migrant camp [located in Matamoros, Mexico], the non-profit Global Response Management (GRM) decided to set up a clinic in the area to ensure that the population is prepared against the coronavirus. Executive director of the GRM Helen Perry says that they are yet to confirm any patients confirmed with COVID-19 in the migrant camp in Matamoros. However, they isolated two patients who were exhibiting symptoms of the disease. The test results are due in days or weeks. She added that they were strengthening safety and security measures in the encampment because they were situated near hotspots in Matamoros. Currently, they had five full-time medical workers and a handful of volunteers to help with the services.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.latinpost.com/articles/145563/20200518/clinic-strengthens-safety-measures-against-covid-19-camp-asylum-seekers.htm>

CLINGING TO HOPE OF A LIFE IN AMERICA, THESE MIGRANTS IN MEXICO UNITED TO PRACTICE THEIR OWN BRAND OF DEMOCRACY

By Emily Kaplan – *The Washington Post* – June 3, 2020

- ❖ The leaders sat in lawn chairs, slippery with dust, beside the Rio Grande. Above them, sagging clotheslines crosshatched the sky. They had arranged themselves in a circle. Here, at least, everyone was equal. The council was meeting by request of Elizabeth Cavazos, a retired mental health professional who, as part of her volunteer work with the Angry Tias and Abuelas of the Rio Grande Valley, relayed information from officials here in Matamoros, Mexico, to the residents of the migrant camp that has arisen along the city's northern shore. In late January, the migrants began to organize. By this point, they had arranged themselves more or less according to country of origin. Mexicans lived closest to the river; Hondurans, next to the Cubans, were farthest to the south; Guatemalans camped by the stadium stairs, and so on. They coordinated a political system, electing a leader from each national community to serve on a governing council that would oversee communication, resource distribution, a cleaning schedule and responses to camp-wide matters as they arose. The leaders set up groups on WhatsApp on their smartphones to provide alerts to everyone in their communities at once. Maura Sammon, a Pennsylvania physician volunteering in the camp, described her impression of its organization. "They've created a spontaneous representative democracy," she told me. "I've never heard of anything like it before." Today marked the first time that all of the elected representatives of each of the eight main countries represented in the camp — Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Ecuador and Cuba — were coming together. One of the most important services the council provides is communication — and the tamping down of misinformation. The council owed its very existence to a rumor. In late January, word got around that the American government had issued a temporary declaration allowing all Guatemalans to enter the United States. No one I talked to was sure how the rumor started, or what — if any — seed of truth it might have contained. Some said it was related to the "safe third country" agreement the United States signed with Guatemala in July; others speculated that some migrants had misunderstood the noisy clamor generated by an activist protest on the Texan side of the bridge. Regardless of the rumor's origin, though, its result was clear: chaos. After the rush to the border that day, Edel, a soft-spoken woman, decided that the rest of the migrants needed a system. "I said, 'Mexico has a list — why not us?'" she recalled. "I realized that we needed to be able to cooperate, to organize, to clean the camp. And if at any moment any lawyers arrived to ask for any piece of information, we would have it." Edel is an organized businesswoman.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/lifestyle/magazine/migrants-in-mexico-practice-their-own-brand-of-democracy/?itid=hp_magazine-left-8-12_maglead-ans%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans

DEPORTATIONS DURING COVID-19

U.S. STARTS FLIGHTS TO TAKE DEPORTED MIGRANTS TO MEXICO CITY

By The Associated Press – May 20, 2020

- ❖ The U.S. government has resumed an old practice of flying deported migrants back to Mexico City, though it apparently did not promise to test them for coronavirus before sending them home. The first flight landed May 19, and video showed migrants sitting on a packed airplane, and having their temperatures checked. Mexico's Foreign Relations Department said Wednesday, May 20, the flights will carry up to 133 migrants apiece. In past years, the U.S. government used such flights to Mexico City, in the country's center, to move migrants away from the border and discourage repeat attempts to cross. This time, it also cited coronavirus concerns. A total of eight flights are planned, four from San Diego, California and four from Brownsville Texas, through May 29. The Mexican government will arrange transportation to their home towns, but will not subject them to a mandatory quarantine, instead suggesting they self-isolate for two weeks. "Before the flights leave, U.S. authorities will carry out sanitary protocols to detect early symptoms of COVID-19," the department said. "It is important to note that only those who, at the time of deportation, show no symptoms or who are asymptomatic, will board the flights." "Upon the arrival of the flight, the international Sanitary team will carry out a preventative check of the Mexican citizens ... to detect symptoms related to COVID-19." The issue of migrants arriving with coronavirus had temporarily halted deportation flights to Guatemala. That nation's government demanded the United States test migrants before sending them back, but some have still arrived infected. U.S. Customs and Border Protection said it "has observed an increase in Mexican nationals who make repeated attempts to enter the U.S. illegally and bypass public health measures. Such behavior increases the risk of exposure to immigration officials at the ports-of-entry, Border Patrol agents, and the American public."
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-starts-flights-deported-migrants-mexico-city-70795770>

EDITORIAL: HYPOCRITICAL, CRUEL RUSH TO DEPORT KIDS

By the Express-News Editorial Board – May 29, 2020

- ❖ The administration is rushing the deportation of children who have been detained in U.S. facilities, sometimes without the notification of their parents or attorneys, according to the Texas Tribune and ProPublica. A record number of migrant children — almost 70,000, many of them unaccompanied by their parents — were held in U.S. custody in 2019, according to the Associated Press, although it is not known how many have been deported recently. Some were released while immigration judges were considering their asylum cases, and a 16-year-old girl, tracked by an international refugee agency, was sent back to Honduras, where she had been raped. In addition to deporting migrants in detention, the U.S. has turned away hundreds of children at the border without addressing their asylum pleas, according to news reports. Historically, minors have been provided shelter, education and medical care while their asylum cases were adjudicated. The change in policy emerged a month ago. The Trump administration is justifying the shift by saying the migrants pose a risk as the country battles the novel coronavirus. In a recent letter to Chad F. Wolf, the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee said the moves had "no known precedent or clear legal rationale." In his efforts to stem the tide of immigration, Trump has exhibited almost stunning hypocrisy, deporting the children while allowing the government to continue processing thousands of visas for temporary workers, including farmworkers and crop pickers — jobs spurned by U.S. citizens.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/editorials/article/Editorial-Hypocritical-cruel-rush-to-deport-kids-15304239.php>

ICE DETAINEES ARE NOT BEING TESTED FOR COVID-19 WHEN THEY ARE DEPORTED

By Adry Torres – Daily Mail – June 4, 2020

- ❖ The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement unit that is in charge of deporting undocumented immigrants is not providing COVID-19 tests when each individual is removed from the country. Appearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, June 2, Henry Lucero, the executive associate director for Enforcement and Removal Operations, confirmed to Illinois Senator Dick Durbin that ICE instead produces a checklist that questions each detainee of any symptoms they may have and that their body temperatures are also registered. Since the coronavirus pandemic spread across 59 ICE jails, a number of undocumented immigrants have tested positive for the deadly virus upon arriving at their native countries. Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei criticized the United States in May for sending back migrants infected with the coronavirus to his Central American country and straining its weak health system. As of May 21, 119 infected detainees had been deported from the U.S. Giammattei temporarily stopped accepting its deported nationals from the United States in April after three deportees tested positive for COVID-19 after arriving on a March 26 flight with 41 Guatemalans, including 10 children.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8389135/ICE-detainees-not-tested-COVID-19-deported.html>

ASYLUM SEEKERS

VATICAN URGES INTERNAL MIGRANTS GET SAME RIGHTS AS REFUGEES

By Nicole Winfield – The Associated Press – May 5, 2020

- ❖ The Vatican says internal migrants should have the same legal protections as refugees and says their children should have the right to birth certificates, education and being reunited with their parents if separated. The Vatican published a booklet of pastoral guidelines to care for internally displaced people — migrants who are forced to flee their homes because of conflict, natural disasters or persecution but don't cross international borders to seek asylum elsewhere. More than 40 million people are believed to be displaced within their own countries. Pope Francis has made the plight of refugees a hallmark of his papacy, calling for countries to welcome, protect, promote and integrate anyone who is forced to leave their homes. The new guidelines apply that appeal to internal migrants and lay out ways the Catholic Church can help through advocacy, education, aid and spiritual assistance. The guidelines call for internal migrants to receive the same U.N.-sanctioned humanitarian protections as refugees, noting that the same forces, dangers and vulnerabilities are at play. It says the church should advocate for family reunifications when children are separated from their parents. To avoid new generations of stateless children, it calls for the church to press governments to issue birth certificates for children of internal migrants, and says the church itself can step in to issue its own forms of identification via school documents or baptismal certificates for Catholics.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/104eddc0491370ceb8ab95156538557f>
- ❖ To read the Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People booklet go to: <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1.-Read-On-Screen-A5-EN-.pdf>

IMMIGRANTS LANGUISH IN DETENTION AS IMMIGRATION COURTS CLOSE FROM CORONAVIRUS FEARS

By Silvia Foster-Frau – The San Antonio Express-News – May 16, 2020

- ❖ About two weeks ago, immigration lawyers showed up at a San Antonio immigration court for hearings or dialed into the courtroom from home. But the doors were shut, the phone disconnected. With no notice, the courts on St. Mary's Street that hold hearings for detained immigrants were shut down indefinitely May 1. Lawyers were told by clerks at another local immigration court that there was a case of coronavirus at the facility. The Executive Office for Immigration Review acknowledged it closed the court when it learned someone who had tested positive with the coronavirus was present. The pandemic has exacerbated the enormous backlog of cases in immigration court, which had surpassed 1 million cases pre-coronavirus — a record high. Non-detained hearings — conducted at the Dolorosa Street court building (in downtown San Antonio) — have been postponed until June 12, which means the immigration proceedings of those who live in the community are delayed. Hearings for migrants caught in the nearly defunct Remain in Mexico (RIM) program, which requires U.S. asylum-seekers to wait on the streets or in shelters in northern Mexico, have been postponed until June 19. San Antonio has nearly 30,400 immigration cases pending in its courts, according to the Syracuse University-based organization Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. Texas has more than 173,000, behind only California with the highest number of backlogged cases.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/news/us-world/border-mexico/article/Immigrants-languish-in-detention-as-immigration-15274007.php>

FAMILY SEPARATIONS

ICE ACCUSED OF USING CORONAVIRUS CRISIS TO LAUNCH 'FAMILY SEPARATION 2.0'

By Chantal Da Silva – NewsWeek – May 19, 2020

- ❖ The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has been accused of trying to exploit the coronavirus pandemic by pressuring immigrant parents to agree to being separated from their children. Recently, ICE officers presented parents with a choice to either agree to be separated from their children so their offspring could be released from detention or face detention together indefinitely. Of the 366 families presented with the choice, not a single family agreed to be separated. Lawyers representing immigrant families faced with the option said it would be easier for ICE to deport adults out of the country if they were separated from their children. Condemning ICE for suggesting that children be separated from their parents rather than simply releasing families together amid the coronavirus pandemic, immigration advocacy group Families Belong Together accused the agency of trying to launch a "Family Separation 2.0" program. Families Belong Together chair Jess Morales Rocketto has now said, in a statement shared with Newsweek: "While tens of thousands lose their lives to one of the biggest public health crises of our lifetime, the Trump administration is doubling down on its sadistic treatment of children and families." In a similar statement published on Twitter, The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) also accused ICE of trying to "take advantage of the #COVID-19 situation in order to separate families again."
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/ice-accused-using-coronavirus-crisis-launch-family-separation-2-0-1505156>
- ❖ To see the form being distributed by ICE among detained families go to: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6891226-Parole-Determination-Worksheet.html>

Benedictine Sisters Corporate Responsibility Coalition

LAWSUIT: TRUMP ORDER SEPARATES IMMIGRANT PARENTS FROM OLDER KIDS

By Julia Ainsley – NBC News – May 28, 2020

- ❖ A class-action lawsuit filed in federal court Thursday, May 28, alleges that the administration's ban on legal immigration in response to the COVID-19 pandemic unfairly separates parent from children who are on the cusp of turning 21 years old. One such parent named in the lawsuit, a Mexican woman filing under the name Mirna S., lives lawfully in the Bronx, New York, under a visa granted in exchange for her cooperation with U.S. law enforcement against her abusive ex-partner. She was due to bring her 20-year-old daughter safely to the U.S. in the coming months on an approved visa, but she will now be unable to do so because her daughter will turn 21 in June. President Donald Trump's proclamation April 22 significantly curtailed legal immigration into the U.S., including limiting entry for immigrants' children who are 21 and older. Advocates say they do not know how many people that provision may affect, but the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute estimates that the proclamation as a whole will affect more than 50,000 over 60 days. Those children are now put into a new non-prioritized category, where wait times for visas can take up to 76 years, the lawsuit alleges. Although Mirna S.'s attorney made multiple requests to expedite her daughter's visa application, the lawsuit alleges, the administration's order was issued so quickly that "it was virtually impossible for any visa petitioner with a sponsored child ... to seek emergency consular services before it took effect." "For the United States citizens and lawful permanent residents sponsoring children and derivative child relatives who will turn 21 during the Proclamation's effective period, the Proclamation will result in a lifetime of family separation," lawyers for the plaintiffs said in the filing. Although the executive order was issued for 60 days, the administration can extend or expand it and has plans to do so, according to a current and former administration officials
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/lawsuit-says-trump-admin-s-covid-19-immigration-order-separates-n1216591>



Migrants wash clothes in the Rio Grande under the Gateway International Bridge in Matamoros.
Photo Credit: Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION BROKE ITS OWN RULES TO SEPARATE DOZENS OF IMMIGRANT FAMILIES, PER A WATCHDOG REPORT

By Ray Levy-Uyeda – Mic.com – June 3, 2020

- ❖ In an internal watchdog report obtained by BuzzFeed News, the Department of Homeland Security found that its agents separated 40 children from their families despite them not fitting the criteria outlined by the agency itself for separation. For a period of time between May and June 2018, agents separated children from their parents on the grounds of previous attempts to enter the United States or another act that the government considers to be an immigration violation. Department agents and Office of Field Operations Staff separated these families during the period of time when the Trump administration was pushing an anti-immigrant "zero tolerance" policy at the border. The policy, which was originally announced in April 2018 by then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, applied harsher criminal penalties to people immigrating without proper documentation. And because adults were taken into custody for prosecution immediately, under the policy many parents were separated from their children, as the law prohibits children from being detained indefinitely. After protests and pressure from elected officials, Trump eventually ended the policy in June 2018 via executive order. But a review from the Department of Homeland Security inspector general found, per BuzzFeed News, that "between May and June 2018, Office of Field Operations staff, operating without clear guidance, separated at least 35 asylum-seeking families at ports of entry for reasons other than the children's welfare or a 'legal requirement,' such as criminal warrants." Those reasons were supposed to be the only reason for separating a child from their parent or guardian. Instead, the report states, officials "separated these families based on the parents' prior immigration violations, such as previously entering the United States without a visa." This report aligns with what other research from the same period of time showed, which is that the U.S. government intentionally chose to bring charges against families, rather than single individuals.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.mic.com/p/the-trump-administration-broke-its-own-rules-to-separate-dozens-of-immigrant-families-per-a-watchdog-report-22955337>

IMMIGRANT MOTHER: ‘THEY TRIED TO SEPARATE MY DAUGHTER FROM ME’

By Silvia Foster-Frau – *The San Antonio Express-News* – June 4, 2020

- ❖ May 14 was the worst day in more than nine months of detention for Honduran immigrant Miriam and her 15-year-old daughter. At 9:30 a.m. that morning, immigration officials brought Miriam to a room full of other mothers and told her to sign a paper, she said. It was in English, and they didn’t explain what it was. An official marked an “X” in red ink next to where she needed to sign. Frightened, and wary without her lawyer, Miriam didn’t sign. Lawyers told her later that if she had, her daughter might have been taken from her. “It felt like the world fell on top of me,” Miriam said from the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley. She asked that her last name not be published, saying she feared retaliation. Parents at the country’s three immigrant family detention centers received the same form that day and were given what immigration lawyers call a “binary choice”: to remain detained indefinitely with their children, or allow their children to be released into the government’s or a sponsor’s custody, in which case the parents would remain detained. The choice was especially fraught because the novel coronavirus has been sweeping through detention facilities. In the end, none of the 350 parents detained in Immigration and Customs Enforcement family detention centers agreed to be separated from their children. The Dilley facility holding Miriam and her daughter is about 70 miles southwest of San Antonio and has more than 80 immigrant families. The other two family detention centers in the U.S. are in Karnes County — about 50 miles southeast of San Antonio — and Leesport, Pa. The facilities can hold a total of 3,000 people — around eight times more than the current population. None of the three is licensed by the state to care for children. ICE presented the form to families after U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee of California ordered the federal government in late April to quickly release migrant children from its custody to protect them from the coronavirus. In court filings, lawyers said children have been detained an average of five months at ICE’s family facilities — well beyond 20 days, the generally accepted maximum time to hold children in detention settings under the Flores settlement. Gee oversees the 1997 Flores agreement, which established a set of protections for migrant children, including limits on how long they can be held in custody. But Flores offers no such protections for the parents of migrant children. To resolve this issue, ICE has typically released families together. But that was at its discretion. In a statement, ICE said it had not changed its policy and that the form it presented to parents was to determine children’s eligibility for release under the court order. Proyecto Dilley, a local nonprofit that offers pro bono legal aid, surveyed 44 of the detained mothers in Dilley, and 35 said they were presented with the “binary choice.” Others said they were given no information at all. Lawyers at the other two family detention facilities said they heard the same from their clients.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/news/us-world/border-mexico/article/Immigrant-mother-They-tried-to-separate-my-15317282.php>

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVAL (DACA)

RELEASE: NEARLY 650,000 AWAIT A SUPREME COURT RULING ON DACA AND THE ADMINISTRATION’S RESPONSE

By Claudia Montecinos – *Center for American Progress* – May 13, 2020

- ❖ As the nation and hundreds of thousands of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients await a decision from the U.S. Supreme Court on the legality of the Trump administration’s termination of DACA, a new column published by the Center for American Progress highlights the stakes of the decision and what the Trump administration must do if the court allows it to end DACA. Should the Supreme Court rule for the government, the administration likely will have the power to preserve the status quo and continue accepting and processing DACA renewal applications or to automatically extend protections for those with upcoming expiration dates. Over the course of the next year, more than 340,000 individuals stand to lose DACA protections if the administration fails to act.
- ❖ Among the key findings of the column:
 - Today, there are nearly 650,000 individuals who currently hold DACA and could lose their protections—all at once or over a period of two years—depending on how the Supreme Court rules and what the administration does.
 - Through the end of March, 23,020 DACA recipients with April, May, and June expirations had yet to apply to renew their protections.
 - If DACA recipients lose the ability to renew their protections, nearly 1 in 5 DACA recipients—119,620—will have lost their protections by November 2020.
- ❖ Source: <https://www.americanprogress.org/press/release/2020/05/13/485046/release-nearly-650000-await-supreme-court-ruling-daca-administrations-response/>
- ❖ To read the column published by the Center for American Progress go to: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2020/05/13/485026/supreme-court-ruling-clear-path-trump-administration-strip-protections-hundreds-thousands-daca-recipients/>

BORDER WALL

UNLIKELY ALLIES BAND TOGETHER IN LAREDO TO OPPOSE THE BORDER WALL

By John Burnett – NPR – May 26, 2020

- ❖ The federal government is planning to put 69 miles of its massive border wall along the river in Texas' Webb and Zapata counties. When it became clear that the imposing barrier would plow through the center of the proud city of Laredo, a remarkably diverse coalition of people assembled to fight it. Tony Medina is a 72-year-old retired land surveyor with a small tract upriver from Laredo that the feds want. With only three acres, he thinks his property would be effectively covered up by the wall and its 150-foot-wide enforcement zone — as wide as a four-lane highway. Downriver, outside the historic town of San Ygnacio, Elsa Hull, a state water quality monitor, lives on a remote plot with her two daughters. The government wants her three acres, too, for the wall, which will have stadium lights installed every 150 feet. Medina and Hull are among some 250 private landowners along the river in Webb and Zapata counties whose land the government is condemning through its powers of eminent domain. They will ultimately be offered a monetary sum, which they can appeal. Customs and Border Protection says more than half of the property owners who've been contacted have voluntarily signed Rights of Entry papers to allow surveyors onto their land, and a quarter of them have refused. The Justice Department has sued the city [of Laredo] to get access to 983 acres of city-owned riverfront. In its response, the city maintains the wall is illegal because when Congress appropriated the funding it did not specify that the structure would be built in Webb County.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/26/861401372/unlikely-allies-band-together-in-laredo-to-oppose-the-border-wall>

PEOPLE ARE SAWING THROUGH AND CLIMBING OVER TRUMP'S BORDER WALL. NOW CONTRACTORS ARE BEING ASKED FOR IDEAS TO MAKE IT LESS VULNERABLE

By Nick Miroff – The Washington Post – June 4, 2020

- ❖ U.S. Customs and Border Protection has asked contractors for help making President Trump's border wall more difficult to climb over and cut through, an acknowledgment that the design currently being installed along hundreds of miles of the U.S.-Mexico boundary remains vulnerable. The notice of the request for information that CBP posted gives federal contractors until June 12 to suggest new anti-breaching and anti-climbing technology and tools, while also inviting proposals for "private party construction" that would allow investors and activists to acquire land, build a barrier on it and sell the whole thing to the government. CBP has not said publicly how often smuggling crews have breached or attempted to breach the structure. Records obtained by The Post via the Freedom of Information Act indicate there were 18 breaches in the San Diego area during a one-month period last fall. The San Diego area has some of the most formidable barriers along the entire border, and construction of new double-layer fencing there is largely complete. Smuggling crews have nonetheless managed to saw through the steel bollards using commercially available demolition tools such as reciprocating saws with inexpensive metal-cutting blades. Others have fashioned long, improvised ladders out of cheap rebar.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/trump-border-wall-vulnerable/2020/06/04/ccd40e5e-a66e-11ea-8681-7d471bf20207_story.html

DETENTION CENTERS NEWS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 CASES AT A TEXAS IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTER SOARED. NOW, TOWN LEADERS WANT ANSWERS

By Perla Trevizo – The Texas Tribune and ProPublica – May 11, 2020

- ❖ As the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread inside immigration detention centers, local leaders in Pearsall, Texas have called on the GEO Group, to publicly explain itself. They say the company has not been transparent, and has failed to respond to emails and letters seeking answers to a simple question: What is the GEO Group doing to prevent the virus outbreak inside the privately owned facility from creeping into their community? The leaders have invited company officials to attend the Frio County commissioners meeting May 11, and sent a list of 20 detailed questions, ranging from what safeguards are in place to protect employees and detainees to how it can make the information more readily available to the community. The letter was drafted before the number of confirmed cases inside the South Texas ICE Processing Center jumped from seven to 31 detainees, as of May 8. Seven employees have also been infected. ICE said there were 900 detainees in custody in Pearsall from May 3rd to 9th. The GEO Group says that it has been in communication with local leaders, although it didn't specify who, and that it has taken steps to mitigate the risks. Nationwide, there are nearly 800 confirmed cases inside immigration detention centers. More than 1 in 4 of those cases are in Texas.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/05/11/covid-19-cases-soar-texas-immigrant-detention-center-town-wants-answer/>
- ❖ To read the transcript from the recent Frio County commissioner's court meeting about the Pearsall detention center's response to COVID-19 go to: <http://www.co.frio.tx.us/upload/page/1949/UPDATED%20RESPONSE.pdf>

SECOND IMMIGRANT DIES OF CORONAVIRUS COMPLICATIONS WHILE IN ICE CUSTODY

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – May 25, 2020

- ❖ An immigrant in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody died of coronavirus complications on Sunday, May 24, while waiting to voluntarily depart to his native Guatemala, becoming the agency's second detainee to die from the virus. The 34-year-old immigrant, Santiago Baten-Oxlag, died at a hospital in Columbus, Georgia after being transferred there from the Stewart Detention Center, a privately operated prison near the state's border with Alabama, according to an ICE notification to Congress obtained by CBS News. Baten-Oxlag had been receiving care at the Columbus hospital since April 17. The preliminary cause of the death, first reported by BuzzFeed News, is "complications related to COVID-19," the notification said. ICE told Baten-Oxlag's family, the Guatemalan government, as well as the offices of inspector general and professional responsibility within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. It is unclear if Baten-Oxlag had any underlying medical conditions. Baten-Oxlag is the second known immigrant to die of COVID-19 while in ICE custody. Earlier this month [May], Carlos Ernesto Escobar Mejía, an immigrant from El Salvador who had lived in the U.S. since the 1980s, died of coronavirus complications at a San Diego-area hospital after being transferred there from a for-profit prison ICE uses to detain hundreds of detainees in southern California. More than 1,200 immigrants have tested positive for coronavirus while in ICE custody, according to the agency. Roughly 50% of the 2,394 detainees ICE has screened for the virus so far have tested positive.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/second-immigrant-dies-of-coronavirus-complications-while-in-ice-custody/?ftag=CNM-00-10aac3a>

AS CORONAVIRUS CASES INCREASE AT DETENTION CENTERS, DOCTORS' GROUP DEMANDS RELEASE OF IMMIGRANTS

By Olivia P. Tallet – Houston Chronicle – May 29, 2020

- ❖ As confirmed COVID-19 cases increase inside Immigration and Customs Enforcement's detention centers, Doctors for America protested Friday, May 29 at facilities in Conroe and near San Antonio, demanding the release of non-violent immigrants. The demonstrations at Joe Corley Detention Facility in Conroe and Karnes County Residential Center southeast of San Antonio were part of a series of actions across the country organized by the advocacy group. "We demand the release of the people that are currently incarcerated in this facility," said Houston physician Dona Kim Murphey, a board member of Doctors for America, at the Corley demonstration. "They are under great threat from COVID-19, as many of us are, but they don't have the privilege to socially distance, they don't have access to resources to keep hygienic circumstances, they are in crowded facilities, they don't have adequate medical care." Confirmed coronavirus cases are mounting at Corley. The number of immigrants under ICE custody infected with COVID-19 increased 48% in a week, from 29 to 46 cases as of May 29, according to the immigration agency's official data. Agency officials said the jump in confirmed cases is a result of ramped up testing to better identify and isolate detainees who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. Nationwide, the agency is reporting 1,392 confirmed cases among ICE detainees. The agency has tested 10% of its roughly 25,900 detained, and half of the people examined are found to be infected. Murphey, who was leading the demonstration, read letters written by healthcare professionals, including herself, addressed to an asylum seeker inside the facility. The letter was addressed to Roger Ernesto La O Munoz, a Cuban epidemiologist who wrote a letter published by the Houston Chronicle describing unsanitary conditions and risk factors that are affecting detainees.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/As-coronavirus-cases-increase-at-detention-15303943.php>
- ❖ To read Ernesto's letter go to: <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/opinion/outlook/article/Opinion-Cuban-ICE-detainee-exposes-unsafe-Texas-15280878.php>

ICE LACKS CORONAVIRUS TESTS FOR IMMIGRANT DETAINEES

By Alexander Nazaryan – Yahoo News – June 2, 2020

- ❖ A top immigration official for the administration admitted that immigrants are not systematically tested for the coronavirus when they are apprehended, nor when they are removed from the United States. The sporadic testing of the 25,900 undocumented immigrants who were in federal custody as of late last month [May] means the coronavirus could continue to proliferate devastatingly through the roughly 200 detention facilities operated by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, where those undocumented immigrants are detained before either being removed from the United States or being allowed a provisional stay here. So far about 1,400 people in ICE custody have tested positive for the coronavirus, according to NBC News. Five — three employees and two detainees — have died from COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus. NBC News found that ICE facilitated the spread of the virus by transferring inmates between facilities. That practice was intended to slow the spread. Testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Henry Lucero, executive associate director for enforcement and removal operations at ICE, appeared to say that a shortfall in supplies prevented the testing of all detainees in ICE custody. Titled "Examining Best Practices for Incarceration and Detention During COVID-19," the hearing also included officials from the federal Bureau of Prisons, which is also struggling with a coronavirus outbreak within its facilities.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://news.yahoo.com/ice-lacks-coronavirus-tests-for-immigrant-detainees-194525819.html>

DOCTOR WHO ADVISED HOMELAND SECURITY TESTIFIES AGAINST COVID-19 PROTOCOLS IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION

By Quinn Owen – ABC News – June 2, 2020

- ❖ A doctor contracted by the Department of Homeland Security to advise on detention health conditions appeared before Congress on June 2 to personally criticize the administration as COVID-19 continues to spread through civil immigration detention centers. Dr. Scott Allen, an independent health expert and medical school professor, told lawmakers that the novel coronavirus' persistence in Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities was in part due to "some gaping holes" in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. He said the CDC has not underscored the importance of reducing the detained population and its guidance on testing remains insufficient. Dana Gold, a senior attorney with the whistleblower rights group Government Accountability Project, represented Allen and specified that the doctor was not speaking on behalf of DHS. Allen has repeatedly voiced personal criticism of immigration detention conditions with legal assistance by the group that represents and advises whistleblowers to help shield them from retaliation. He first raised alarms about the threat of COVID-19 in a March letter to Congress. Recent projections from a study in the Journal of Urban Health, which looked at 111 ICE detention facilities, show coronavirus outbreaks can potentially spread to nearly every detainee and overwhelm local hospitals. Two detainees have died in ICE custody after contracting the disease. More than a quarter of detainees tested by ICE came back positive and are currently monitored or isolated, according to the agency. Out of the nearly 26,000 people held by ICE on an average day in recent months, at least 900 deemed to be at high risk of infection have been released.



Families detained at a U.S. Border Patrol Station in McAllen, Texas
Photo Credit: Office of Inspector General/Department of Homeland Security/Getty Images

- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/doctor-advised-homeland-security-testifies-covid-19-protocols/story?id=71030467>

MIGRANTS SAY THEY WERE FORCED TO CLEAN COVID-INFECTED ICE FACILITY

By Jacob Soboroff – NBC News – June 10, 2020

- ❖ Asylum-seeking migrants locked up inside an Arizona Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center with one of the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases say they were forced to clean the facility and are "begging" for protection from the virus, according to a letter obtained exclusively by NBC News. "This is a life or death situation," said a translation of their message, dated May 18, and sent to the Florence Immigrants & Refugees Rights Project, a legal advocacy group that has filed a lawsuit on behalf of migrants in the facility. The migrants appealed for help to the advocacy group from inside one of 24 "tanks," which hold 120 men each, in the La Palma Correctional Center outside of Phoenix, which is operated for ICE by the for-profit company CoreCivic. ICE's official count says that as of June 7, 78 detainees have tested positive at La Palma, with 14 cases currently under monitoring and zero deaths. The migrants say the facility forced detainees in inadequate personal protective equipment to clean and work in the facility's kitchen despite their fear it was a prime point for spreading the virus inside the center due to crowding at meal times. When some migrants protested, the letter says, they were punished with verbal threats and indefinite lock-ins. On one day when migrants resisted working in the kitchen, some were "sent to the hole," otherwise known as solitary confinement. Two migrants described being asked to clean the trash from the nurses' office, where sick patients were treated. One said he was asked to clean the feces-covered cell of a mentally ill detainee without gloves. Other allegations include guards not wearing adequate equipment to prevent infection as they passed from one cell to another and "no measures for social distancing" while immigrants lined up for food. The migrants say they were given two "disposable masks of very poor quality in the month of April" and received "2 cloth masks" in May. They also say they did not receive basic hygiene supplies, like toilet paper, on weekends. The migrants say that after the kitchen closed due to COVID concerns in mid-May, they were served sandwich boxes that included two slices of "rotted" ham with bread. Lawyers for 13 migrants, held in both La Palma and nearby Eloy Detention Center, which has 13 positive cases, described the facilities in a federal lawsuit filed June 8 as "tinderboxes on the verge of explosion." The lawsuit says the migrants are being unlawfully detained because their asylum hearings have been delayed and asks ICE to release the migrants because of the risk of COVID-19 infection.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/detained-migrants-say-they-were-forced-clean-covid-infected-ice-n1228831>
- ❖ To read the letter describing the conditions at La Palma Correctional Center, go to: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6940319-La-Palma-May-18-Complaint-Letter.html>

REPORTS

ICE AIR EXPORTING COVID: ANALYSIS OF THE 300 ICE AIR 2020 DEPORTATION FLIGHTS AND ACTIVITY PRE/EARLY COVID (JAN/FEB) COMPARED TO IN-COVID (MARCH/APRIL)

By Thomas Cartwright – *Witness at the Border* – May 5, 2020

- ❖ The pandemic rages and ICE Air continues to shuttle detainees between detention centers and place them on deportation flights without regard for the safety of their passengers, employees or contractors. Moreover, without concern for the receiving countries, many of which have undeveloped, ill-equipped, and over taxed medical emergency capabilities. There can be no doubt that these flights are spreading and seeding COVID. As of this writing only 1,528, or 5%, of the 28,900 detainees have been tested. Yet, of those tested, 753, or 49%, have tested positive. Carlos Ernesto Escobar Mejia was the first ICE detainee to die from COVID. ICE has announced that they will be securing 2,000 tests per month to test detainees. That level is woefully inadequate to determine which deportees may have COVID, much less to identify infected detainee residents in centers before the virus spreads through the centers. Using very conservative numbers, if there are 7 deportation flights per week and there are 50 people per flight that is 350 deportees in a week. Based on the current percent positive of those tested it means you would have to test 2,800 per month just to determine who can be deported, with no consideration at all to testing deeper into the population of 28,900 detainees to mitigate the rapid spread there. Perhaps the testing is only to determine who can be deported and not to save the rest of the detainees? Or, all deportees will not be tested. For the 3 Guatemalan flights alone, ICE would need to test 450 at a 50% positive rate.
- ❖ To read the report on its entirety go to: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e221cacff87ba2d2833cf54/t/5eb4b9f391421a37a2136fc3/1588902398772/ICE+Air+Change+PDFv2.3FL.pdf>

REPORT: DEPORTATION WITH A LAYOVER: FAILURE OF PROTECTION UNDER THE U.S.- GUATEMALA ASYLUM COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

By Rachel Schmidtke, Yael Schacher, and Ariana Sawyer – *Refugees International and Human Rights Watch* – May 19, 2020

- ❖ An agreement between the United States and Guatemala, the U.S.-Guatemala Asylum Cooperative Agreement (ACA), enables the United States to rapidly transfer non-Guatemalan asylum seekers to Guatemala without allowing them to lodge asylum claims in the United States, but also leaves them without access to effective protection in Guatemala. As a result, they are effectively compelled to abandon their asylum claims and some who have a well-founded fear of persecution appear to be returning to their home countries where they are at real risk of serious harm.
- ❖ To read this report on its entirety go to: https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2020/5/8/deportation-with-a-layover-failure-of-protection-under-the-us-guatemala-asylum-cooperative-agreement?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiWldNNFpqZ3dOMk0zTIROaSlInQiOiJlOek02T01RRGFZbk9tWUNBb2FBdmZiM21EV3JaMWp0UExtOVFDcUd4RzR2SWNneUdQeDhud2hQS3huVDI1T3g0cDk3UXI0Y0dFemR4clplakt0QmMyeWRVNUV6WFdlakxtMVBjR3JCalhpdWE4WGxlYytXc3g1c2JMbFJkY3JnVjY9

FAMILY SEPARATION 2.0: “YOU AREN’T GOING TO SEPARATE ME FROM MY ONLY CHILD.

By Amnesty International – May 21, 2020

- ❖ This briefing report documents ICE’s actions on May 13 and May 14, 2020, presenting families detained at the three family residential centers with a binary choice of separating from their children or remaining detained together. It is based on interviews with legal service providers and review of public documents, and has quotations and first-hand accounting from families as reported to their lawyers.
- ❖ To read this report go to: https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Amnesty-International-USA-Family-Separation-2.0_May-21-2020-.pdf

ICE AIR: 1,677 FLIGHTS WHILE COVID-19 RAGES

By Thomas Cartwright – *Witness at the Border* – May 29, 2020

- ❖ This report will quantify, in stark terms, the likely transmission of COVID through ICE Air flights shuffling detainees between detention centers. The volume of flights throughout the first four months of 2020 is startling, and even more breathtaking is the volume of flights in the heart of the pandemic in March and April.
- ❖ To read the report on its entirety go to: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e221cacff87ba2d2833cf54/t/5ed15d60d45eb54e7a12af93/1590779233242/FinalDomesticICE+AirLINK+Change+v5.1.pdf>

COURT RULINGS/HEARINGS DURING COVID-19

JUDGE DEMANDS ICE BETTER EXPLAIN WHY IT WON'T RELEASE KIDS

By Nomaan Merchant – The Associated Press – May 22, 2020

- ❖ On May 22, Judge Dolly M. Gee criticized the administration's handling of detained immigrant children and families, ordering the government to give the court detailed information about its efforts to quickly release them in the wake of the coronavirus. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has come under fire for allegedly asking parents in custody if they would allow their children to be released without them. Parents at all three facilities — one in Pennsylvania and two in Texas — were called into short meetings and asked if there were sponsors available to care for their children, lawyers who represent the families reported. They were then asked to sign a form. Gee wrote that she didn't find that ICE officially sought to get those formal waivers, but that officers' conversations with detained parents "caused confusion and unnecessary emotional upheaval and did not appear to serve the agency's legitimate purpose of making continuous individualized inquiries regarding efforts to release minors." While some parents reported slightly different details, the lawyers said they broadly believed they were being asked to choose between staying in custody with their children or letting their children leave. In a statement, the agency said the form was used as part of a "routine parole review consistent with the law" and Gee's previous orders. "The court recognized that parents, not the government, should decide whether the juvenile should be released to a sponsor," the agency said.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/judge-demands-ice-explain-release-kids-70845534>

U.S./MEXICO BORDER

CORONAVIRUS ON THE BORDER

By Kevin Sieff – The Washington Post – May 27, 2020

- ❖ As Mexico's health-care system has strained under the coronavirus, small community hospitals in Southern California, some of the poorest in the state, have been flooded with Americans who have fallen ill and crossed the border. They are retirees and dual citizens, Americans working in Mexico or visiting family there. It is an example of how easily the virus moves between countries, even as governments — and particularly the administration — have attempted to shut their borders. And it's a window into how many American lives span the U.S.-Mexico border, including families who have moved freely across the region since before that line was drawn and whose movement has continued during the pandemic. For years, the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission conducted simulations on how the two countries would respond if a pandemic settled on the border. A special procedure was created for Mexican ambulances to transfer patients to U.S. ambulances on American soil. Then a real pandemic struck. Now, approximately half of the coronavirus patients in several California border hospitals, including El Centro Regional Medical Center, are recent arrivals from Mexico. As a result of that surge, Imperial County, home to El Centro, has a much higher concentration of coronavirus cases — 760 per 100,000 residents — than any other county in California. About 1.5 million Americans live in Mexico, and more than 250,000 of them live in the cities just south of California.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/05/27/coronavirus-mexico-border/?arc404=true>

DEVELOPING STORIES

FEDERAL AGENCY GIVES MEATPACKERS ROOM TO HIRE H-2B WORKERS

By Ellyn Ferguson – Roll Call – May 13, 2020

- ❖ The administration plans a temporary change to rules on H-2B guest workers to help beleaguered meatpacking plants keep those foreign employees in the United States as the companies deal with absenteeism and workers quarantined because of COVID-19 exposure. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a part of the Homeland Security Department, is scheduled to put the temporary rule change into effect on May 14. The rule is set to last through May 15, 2023, to allow meat and poultry companies to rehire current H-2B employees whose work contracts or three-year visas are expiring. The companies also would be able to hire other H-2B workers with expiring visas who otherwise would have to return to their home countries. Employers and workers have until Sept. 11 this year to enter into new work contracts. USCIS offered no estimate as to how many H-2B workers would be affected by the rule change. The U.S. offers 66,000 H-2B visas per fiscal year, with half available Oct. 1 through March 31 and the remaining half available April 1 through Sept. 30. Workers with expired H-2B visas are generally required to spend three consecutive months out of the U.S. before applying for a new visa.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/05/13/federal-agency-gives-meatpackers-room-to-hire-h-2b-workers/>

CEPEDA: HOW MANY IMMIGRANTS HAVE TO DIE FROM COVID-19?

By Esther J. Cepeda – The San Antonio Express-News – May 14, 2020

- ❖ A recent wave of COVID-19 infections and deaths has highlighted the brutal cost of being an essential Hispanic worker. Latinos are overwhelmingly overrepresented among people infected with the virus relative to their share of the population, according to Rogelio Sáenz, professor of demography at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Sáenz, who wrote recently about the issue on the Latino Decisions blog, analyzed data from the 38 states and the District of Columbia that report COVID-19 infection cases and/or deaths for Latinos. It's no surprise that Latinos have been so hard hit by the virus. "Essential" services these days usually consist of harvesting, preparing, cooking, selling or delivering food, and often for companies that don't offer personal protective equipment, health insurance benefits or paid time off for illness. Worse, not only are these truly essential workers often toiling in this country without the proper permits and authorizations — for cruelly low wages — but they're seen by many as disposable and definitely not important people.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.mysanantonio.com/opinion/commentary/article/Cepeda-How-many-immigrants-have-to-die-from-15270655.php>

MEMO OFFERED TO BUY OUT IMMIGRATION BOARD MEMBERS

By Tanvi Misra – Roll Call – May 27, 2020

- ❖ The Justice Department offered buyouts to pre-Trump administration career members on its influential immigration appeals board as part of an ongoing effort to restructure the immigration court system. Critics view the move as an effort to push out the civil servants on the board and stack it with new hires who would align with the Trump administration's restrictive immigration agenda. An internal memo viewed by CQ Roll Call shows that James McHenry, the director of the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), offered financial incentives to longtime members of the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) to encourage them to retire or resign. The buyouts and "voluntary separation incentive payments" were offered to "individuals whose positions will help us strategically restructure EOIR in order to accommodate skills, technology, and labor markets," according to the April 17 memo. EOIR is the Justice Department agency that oversees the Board of Immigration Appeals, a 23-member body that reviews appealed decisions by immigration judges and sets precedent. According to two knowledgeable sources at EOIR who declined to be identified for fear of retaliation, the memo was sent to the nine board members appointed under previous Republican and Democratic administrations, before Trump took office. No one accepted the buyout offers, according to both sources. The memo sheds light on an ongoing debate over BIA hiring. Immigration judges, lawyers and former EOIR employees say the Trump administration has used the board to help meet its goal of reducing immigration, while government officials say they have simply streamlined a lengthy hiring process that was always subject to political judgments.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/05/27/doj-memo-offered-to-buy-out-immigration-board-members/>

NYC BANS THE TERMS 'ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT' AND 'ALIEN,' WILL NOW REFER TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AS 'NONCITIZENS'

By William Davis – The Daily Caller – May 29, 2020

- ❖ New York City reportedly outlawed the use of the terms "alien" and "illegal immigrant" in official government documents Thursday and will now refer to illegal immigrants as "noncitizens." New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson said the term "alien" was "dehumanizing," and said New York will become the first city to bar the language in government documents. "These words are outdated and loaded words used to dehumanize the people they describe. It's time to retire them," Council Member Francisco Moya, the resolution's sponsor said, according to an NBC affiliate in New York. "Words matter. The language we choose to use has power and consequences." The report also stated that the new resolution will make it a crime to threaten "someone for their use of another language or their limited English proficiency, and [to threaten] to call Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on a person based on a discriminatory motive." The move to strike the "dehumanizing" language from government documents comes just months after New York City's Commission on Human Rights threatened \$250,000 fines for individuals who use the term "illegal" in a derogatory way, a measure some considered unconstitutional. While New York is the first city to make such a move, lawmakers in other parts of the country, including Colorado, have also introduced legislation that would ban the term "illegal" from government documents.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://dailycaller.com/2020/05/29/nyc-illegal-immigrants-alien-banned-non-citizen-political-correctness/>

BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC, THE U.S. POSTPONED CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES FOR MONTHS. THAT COULD KEEP THOUSANDS FROM VOTING IN 2020

By Catherine E. Shoichet – CNN – June 5, 2020

- ❖ Citizenship ceremonies across the United States have become yet another casualty of the coronavirus pandemic. The system for swearing in new Americans screeched to a virtual standstill for months. And it's only just starting to get going again. What could that mean for the 2020 election? One company that helps immigrants apply for green cards and citizenship says it did the math. Seattle-based Boundless Immigration warns that because of the large number of ceremonies that were postponed, thousands of would-be citizens might not make the cut in time to cast ballots in November -- unless officials take significant steps to push through the backlog. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officials say they're reopening some offices this week and starting to reschedule ceremonies, while following CDC guidelines to protect workers and the public. About 765,000 people become US citizens every year -- averaging out to 2,100 new citizens a day, according to a Boundless analysis of government data. That, Boundless says, means more than 120,000 immigrants who would have taken citizenship oaths over the past few months are in limbo -- waiting for word on when their ceremonies will be rescheduled. And the number grows with each passing day. USCIS says it plans to shorten naturalization ceremonies and limit attendance to those being sworn in and individuals providing assistance for the disabled. But the agency that schedules and oversees naturalization ceremonies says its citizenship oaths won't be going remote. "Naturalizing new United States citizens is a critical benefit we administer at USCIS and we're working hard to resume that process," Joseph Edlow, the agency's deputy director for policy, said in a written statement provided to CNN. "However, we will not ignore federal law, which has clear in-person requirements for naturalization, in the name of convenience or expediency." Federal regulations state that citizenship applicants must "appear in person in a public ceremony," except under exceptional circumstances, such as incapacitating disability.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/04/us/citizenship-ceremonies-coronavirus/index.html>

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION OKS AID TO CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES PRAISED FOR IMMIGRATION HELP

By Tracy Wilkinson – Los Angeles Times – June 5, 2020

- ❖ If the president of a country is implicated in running a massive drug-trafficking network, you might think that would be a disqualifier for receiving U.S. aid. But not if the country is Honduras and the administration holds the purse strings. The State Department in recent days has quietly certified Honduras and its two Central American neighbors, El Salvador and Guatemala, for millions of dollars in U.S. aid, despite each country's failure to demonstrate progress on human rights and good governance. In documents filed with Congress and reviewed by The Times, State Department analysts reported limited success in the countries' efforts to improve human rights, police practices and governance, or in curbing corruption and violence. Where the three received the highest marks, however, was in their cooperation with President Trump's immigration policies, designed to drastically reduce legal and illegal migration from Central America to the United States. U.S. law has for a couple of decades made some foreign aid contingent on advances in human rights and other issues, which is why the State Department is required to make its annual assessment. At stake is about \$500 million for each of fiscal years 2019 and 2020 to be divvied among the three countries.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-06-05/trump-administration-clears-u-s-aid-to-central-american-countries-after-praising-immigration-help>

WHITE HOUSE PREPARES NEW IMMIGRATION LIMITS, USING CORONAVIRUS AS COVER

By Priscilla Alvarez – CNN – June 9, 2020

- ❖ The administration is preparing to roll out another set of restrictions on legal immigration, citing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. One of the key figures behind the push to limit immigration is Stephen Miller. In April, Trump signed an executive order barring some immigration to the U.S. after teasing an outright ban on immigration to the country. Trump argued that the order was needed to protect American jobs. Against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, the administration has pressed forward with a series of immigration measures that, prior to coronavirus, had struggled to break through. Among those changes is the closure of the southern border to migrants, including those seeking asylum. Interest groups, businesses and experts are fighting any new restrictions, saying that visas allowing immigrants to temporarily work in the U.S. are critical to the economy. Legal immigration, which has already taken a hit during the outbreak, is again in focus in deliberations about an anticipated immigration executive order. A slate of visas, which allow immigrants to temporarily work in the U.S., are under consideration to be suspended for a period time, including L-1 visas for intracompany transfers, H-1Bs for workers in a speciality occupation, H-2Bs for temporary non-agricultural workers and J-1 visas for exchange visitors, according to three sources familiar with plans.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/09/politics/immigration-limits-coronavirus/index.html>

DOJ 'REASSIGNED' CAREER MEMBERS OF BOARD OF IMMIGRATION APPEALS

By Tanvi Misra – Roll Call – June 9, 2020

- ❖ Career members at the Board of Immigration Appeals appointed prior to the Trump administration have been “reassigned” to new roles after they rejected recent buyout offers by the Justice Department. The step appears to be the latest administrative move that critics say dilutes the independence of an important appeals body by filling it with new hires more willing to carry out the Trump administration’s restrictive immigration policies. “This is to inform you that effective June 8, 2020, you will be reassigned from your current position as Board Member (Senior Level) to the Appellate Immigration Judge position,” said an email that went out last week to nine career members. The Board of Immigration Appeals, or BIA, is a 23-member body under the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), the Justice Department agency overseeing the immigration court system. Three-member BIA panels review immigration court decisions and issue precedent-setting rulings that shape national immigration law. The difference between “board member” and “appellate immigration judge” roles goes beyond title, extending to pay ranges and leave policy. Appellate immigration judges also hear cases at both the trial and appellate levels, creating potential conflicts of interests, critics say. Sources familiar with the agency’s personnel matters, who declined to be identified for fear of retaliation, confirmed that all nine career members selected prior to the Trump administration received the email. The reassignment comes after DOJ offered, in an April 17 memo, “voluntary separation incentive payments” to the nine career board members, “individuals whose positions will help us strategically restructure EOIR in order to accommodate skills, technology, and labor markets.” That memo, authored by EOIR Director James McHenry, noted the window for requesting these incentives closed on May 15. None of the nine career members accepted the offer, according to the sources at EOIR. Under the Trump administration, the BIA has expanded from 17 members to 23. In addition, a flurry of career members have departed the agency, prompting EOIR to launch successive hiring sprees to fill new openings and vacant positions. The nine most recent hires to the board include several immigration judges who denied over 90 percent of the asylum requests before them. Some also have a history of formal complaints of bias. The new hires have come on not as “board members” but as “appellate immigration judges.”
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/06/09/doj-reassigned-career-members-of-board-of-immigration-appeals/>



CBP announces 65 miles of new border wall construction in Rio Grande Valley Sector.

Photo Credit: U.S. Customs and Border Patrol