

NEWS ARTICLES ON KEY ISSUES - DECEMBER 17, 2020

LATEST STATISTICS

Number Of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases Among ICE Staff And Detained Immigrants

By U.S. Immigration And Customs Enforcement – December 15, 2020

As of **December 11, 2020**, the total detained population is: **16,163**¹. There have been **564** confirmed cases of COVID-19 among those in ICE custody as of **December 14, 2020**². To date, there have been **72,784** total detainees tested.

COVID-19 ICE Detainee Statistics by Facility			
Custody/AOR/Facility	Confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring	Detainee deaths ³	Total confirmed COVID-19 cases ⁴
Atlanta Field Office			
Charleston County Detention Center	0	0	2
Columbia Regional Care Center	0	0	1
Folkston ICE Processing Center	11	0	83
Irwin County Detention Center	5	0	49
Robert A. Deyton Detention Center	1	0	4
Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center	0	0	1
Stewart Detention Center	21	3	400
Baltimore Field Office			
Howard County Detention Center	1	0	1
Worcester County Jail	0	0	1
Boston Field Office			
Bristol County Detention Center	0	0	1
Cumberland County Jail	1	0	1
Franklin County House of Corrections	1	0	8
Strafford County Corrections	0	0	2
Wyatt Detention Center	1	0	4
Buffalo Field Office			
Buffalo (Batavia) Service Processing Center	0	0	50
Chicago Field Office			
Chase County Detention Facility	0	0	82
Clay County Justice Center	0	0	17
Dodge County Jail	2	0	2
Lincoln County Detention Center	0	0	1
McHenry County Adult Correctional Facility	0	0	5
Montgomery County Jail	0	0	1
Morgan County Detention Center	0	0	1
Pulaski County Detention Center	2	0	102
Dallas Field Office			
Bluebonnet Detention Facility	22	0	371
Eden Detention Center	0	0	62
Johnson County Law Enforcement Center	0	0	1

COVID-19 ICE Detainee Statistics by Facility			
Custody/AOR/Facility	Confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring	Detainee deaths ³	Total confirmed COVID-19 cases ⁴
Dallas Field Office Cont'd			
Kay County Detention Center	0	0	1
Moore Detention Center	1	0	35
PrairieLand Detention Facility	2	0	120
Rolling Plains Detention Center	0	0	59
Denver Field Office			
Aurora Contract Detention Facility	16	0	134
Detroit Field Office			
Butler County Jail	1	0	1
Calhoun County Correctional Center	13	0	51
Geauga County Jail	0	0	1
Monroe County Jail	0	0	1
Morrow County Correctional Facility	0	0	51
Saint Clair County Jail	1	0	12
El Paso Field Office			
Cibola County Correctional Center	0	0	1
El Paso Service Processing Center	47	0	305
Otero County Processing Center	0	0	185
Torrance County Detention Center	0	0	55
Houston Field Office			
Coastal Bend Detention Center	0	0	12
Houston Contract Detention Facility	1	0	157
IAH Polk Adult Detention Facility	0	0	31
Joe Corley Detention Center	0	1	51
Montgomery Processing Center (Houston)	4	0	225
Los Angeles Field Office			
Adelanto ICE Processing Center	19	0	262
Miami Field Office			
Baker County Detention Center	1	0	11
Broward Transitional Center	1	0	160
Glades County Detention Center	1	1	179
Krome North Service Processing Center	2	0	212
Larkin Behavioral Health Center	0	0	2
San Juan Staging Facility	0	0	1
Wakulla County Jail	0	0	41
Newark Field Office			
Elizabeth Detention Center	17	0	37

COVID-19 ICE Detainee Statistics by Facility			
Custody/AOR/Facility	Confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring	Detainee deaths ³	Total confirmed COVID-19 cases ⁴
Newark Field Office Cont'd			
Essex County Jail	6	0	14
New Orleans Field Office			
Adams County Correctional Center	4	0	105
Alexandria Staging Facility	16	0	199
Allen Parish Detention Center	0	0	12
Catahoula Correctional Center	0	0	119
Etowah County Jail	2	0	24
Hancock County Jail	0	0	1
Jackson Parish Correctional	4	0	113
LaSalle ICE Processing Center - Jena	3	0	82
LaSalle ICE Processing Center - Olla	0	0	25
Pine Prairie ICE Processing Center	0	0	65
Richwood Correctional Center	2	0	127
River Correctional Center	0	0	56
South Louisiana Correctional Center	18	0	25
Winn Correctional Center	4	1	247
New York City Field Office			
Bergen County Jail	1	0	7
Hudson County Jail	0	0	14
Philadelphia Field Office			
Berks Family Residential Center	1	0	1
Cambria County Prison	0	0	11
Clinton County Correctional Facility	52	0	55
Howard R. Young Correctional Institution	1	0	1
Pike County Correctional Facility	9	0	33
York County Prison	32	0	140
Phoenix Field Office			
CCA Florence Correctional Center	23	0	77
Eloy Federal Contract Facility	6	0	266
Florence Detention Center	10	0	86
La Palma Correctional Facility	24	0	501
Salt Lake City Field Office			
Cache County Jail	0	0	15
Henderson Detention Center	3	0	25
Nevada Southern Detention Center	0	0	12
Nye County Jail	9	0	59

COVID-19 ICE Detainee Statistics by Facility			
Custody/AOR/Facility	Confirmed cases currently under isolation or monitoring	Detainee deaths ³	Total confirmed COVID-19 cases ⁴
Salt Lake City Field Office Cont'd			
Washington County Jail	1	0	6
San Antonio Field Office			
El Valle Detention Facility	13	0	102
Karnes County Family Residential Center	1	0	90
Laredo Processing Center	0	0	7
LaSalle County Regional Detention Center	10	0	11
Limestone County Detention Center	29	0	88
Port Isabel Detention Center	5	0	200
Rio Grande Detention Center	7	0	171
South Texas Family Residential Center (Dilley)	16	0	22
South Texas ICE Processing Center (Pearsall)	6	0	272
T. Don Hutto Residential Center	1	0	1
Webb County Detention Center (CCA)	2	0	94
San Diego Field Office			
Imperial Regional Detention Facility	1	0	6
Otay Mesa Detention Center (San Diego CDF)	9	1	200
San Luis Regional Detention Center	0	0	20
San Francisco Field Office			
Golden State Annex Facility	0	0	3
Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center	0	0	59
Seattle Field Office			
Northwest ICE Processing Center (NWIPC)	1	0	22
St. Paul Field Office			
Douglas County Corrections	0	0	1
Freeborn County Adult Detention Center	0	0	5
Hardin County Jail	0	0	7
Kandiyoh County Jail	21	0	22
Linn County Jail	0	0	2
Nobles County Jail	0	0	2
Phelps County Jail	0	0	2
Polk County Jail	0	0	15
Sherburne County Jail	0	0	2
Washington D.C. Field Office			
Caroline Detention Facility	15	0	56
Immigration Centers of America - Farmville	0	1	339
TOTAL	564	8	7,990

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 those who have died after testing positive for COVID-19 while in 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. Some detainees may no longer be in ICE custody or may have since tested negative.

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

There have been 153 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among ICE employees not assigned to detention facilities.

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

LATEST NEWS

The Administration Says The U.S. Can't House More Migrant Children. Shelter Officials Disagree.

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – December 14, 2020

❖ The administration has told federal courts that the country's shelters will be overwhelmed by an influx of minors apprehended along the border with Mexico unless it can rapidly expel migrant children from the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. The underage migrants, the administration has contended, could spread the coronavirus across the U.S. government's shelter network, posing a risk to staff and straining medical resources. Sending the children back to their home countries without allowing them to request U.S. asylum or see an immigration judge would be the best way to safeguard public health, President Trump's top officials have argued. With apprehensions of minors along the U.S.-Mexico border rising steadily since the spring, housing facilities for underage migrants could reach maximum capacity next month, according to a recent court declaration from the head of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a federal agency charged with caring for undocumented and unaccompanied children. But federal shelter contractors who operate these facilities disagree with the administration's court declarations and say there's a safe way to care for and house migrant children before they're placed with family members in the U.S. — even during a pandemic. Shelter officials acknowledged the logistical challenges, but said that the refugee office could act more quickly in some cases and expedite the release of children who have U.S. sponsors willing to care for them, move others to housing further inland to make space for new arrivals and ask contractors to increase bed capacity. As a last resort, the agency could also reopen two emergency "influx" facilities in Texas and Florida, the people said. The U.S. government oversees 13,000 beds for migrant children, but the refugee office has said it can only use 8,700 of them due to COVID-19 containment policies. On December 10, the office had approximately 3,500 minors in its custody. Three federal shelter contractors said they had hundreds of vacant beds. Private nonprofits and for-profit groups operate 176 facilities to house migrant minors in 22 states under grants from the refugee office. The current population of minors housed by the refugee office is well below the 11,636 and 8,997 monthly averages in the two fiscal years before the pandemic, according to a CBS News analysis of government data. The population is, however, significantly higher than in the spring and summer, when it dropped below 800, largely as a result of a policy the Trump administration instituted in late March to expel most border-crossers, whom it said could spread the virus. The uptick accompanies a steady rise in border interdictions of unaccompanied minors, which reached 4,764 in October after plummeting to 741 in April. The refugee agency received 1,530 children from U.S. immigration officials in October, compared to 162 from April to June. According to a December 3 data report by the refugee agency, 1,061 cases of COVID-19 among migrant children in its custody have been reported throughout the pandemic. Most of the minors, 943 of them, have recovered and none have required hospitalization.

❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/migrant-children-mexico-border-trump-administration-shelter-officials-covid-19/>



A young girl played in her family's tent last month at a camp of asylum seekers near the U.S. border in Matamoros, Mexico.

Photo Credit: Eric Gay/Associated Press

Arrests Of Immigrant Children At Border Climb, Fueling Concern For Biden Team

By Alicia A. Caldwell and Michelle Hackman – Wall Street Journal – December 9, 2020

- ❖ In October, 4,630 unaccompanied children were taken into custody by border patrol agents, up from 712 in April, while 4,501 migrants traveling as families arrived in October, compared with 716 in April, U.S. Customs and Border Protection data show. During one six-day period in mid-November about 1,000 children were taken into custody, according to a recent federal court filing made by the federal government. The growing number of children and families has at times created backups at Border Patrol stations—tight quarters designed to house single adults for hours, rather than children for days. Lawyers representing the youth in a decades-old court case said in a recent court filing that almost three dozen children, including six infants, were held longer than the three-day limit allowed under government guidelines. According to the children's lawyers, those held at a Texas border station said they were denied hand sanitizer and soap, and described scant access to masks and other protective gear. In a separate federal lawsuit, acting CBP Commissioner Mark Morgan said that Border Patrol stations aren't designed to allow for social distancing and that the government needed to quickly send children back to their home countries without allowing them to ask for refuge. He said child migrants weren't following Covid-19 safety procedures as instructed by agents.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.wsj.com/amp/articles/arrests-of-immigrant-children-at-border-climb-fueling-concern-for-biden-team-11607518801>

ASYLUM SEEKERS

Birth On A Riverbank: Woman's Ordeal Shows Risks At Border

By Nomaan Merchant – Associated Press – December 15, 2020

- ❖ Increasing numbers of parents and children are crossing the border, driven by violence and poverty in Central America and growing desperation in migrant camps in Mexico. While crossings have not reached the levels seen in previous years, facilities that hold migrants are approaching capacity, which has been reduced because of the coronavirus pandemic. U.S. Customs and Border Protection said Monday [Dec. 14] that it made roughly 4,500 apprehensions of unaccompanied immigrant children in November, more than six times the figure in April. In South Texas' Rio Grande Valley, children and their parents are usually taken to a small station where some young people report having to use old masks and being detained in cramped quarters. Since 2017, six children have died shortly after being detained. Agents separated thousands of families in 2017 and 2018 and have been accused of refusing entry to pregnant women or forcing them to return to Mexico under government policies restricting asylum. Since the pandemic, the government has expelled more than 200,000 people within hours or days, citing a public-health declaration. In its final days, the administration is formalizing new restrictions on asylum and other immigration protections that would take months or years for President-elect Joe Biden to unwind. Sister Norma Pimentel, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, wants reforms to allow people to enter the U.S. safely and pursue their immigration cases, reducing the chance that desperate families will risk their lives in the hands of smugglers. "There needs to be a process for that, and it doesn't exist at this point," Pimentel said.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/article/mexico-coronavirus-pandemic-immigration-border-patrols-central-america-bc69a0051e75fa8c34a1871399307738>

U.S. Border Officials Expelled Dozens Of Migrant Children In Violation Of Court Order

By Camilo Montoya-Galvez – CBS News – December 13, 2020

- ❖ U.S. border officials have expelled at least 66 unaccompanied migrant children without a court hearing or asylum interview since a federal judge ordered them to stop the practice, the administration conceded on Saturday [Dec. 13]. In a filing in federal court in Washington, Justice Department lawyers acknowledged the expulsions represented a "contravention" of a ruling issued by U.S. District Court Judge Emmet Sullivan in November that prohibits the administration from using a pandemic-era emergency border policy to expel minors who are apprehended without their parents or legal guardians. On November 18, Sullivan found that the public health law the administration has been invoking since March does not allow immigration authorities to expel border-crossers with little or no due process. He also rejected the argument that the public health authority, which dates back to the late 19th century, overrides several legal safeguards Congress established for migrant children. Through his ruling, Sullivan designated all unaccompanied migrant children taken into U.S. custody as class members in the court case. Several federal laws require border officials to quickly transfer unaccompanied migrant children to shelters and other housing facilities administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, which is mandated to connect the minors with lawyers and child advocates while they pursue an asylum claim or other forms of relief from deportation. Arguing that these requirements could be suspended during a public health emergency, the administration expelled thousands of unaccompanied migrant children to Mexico and Central America. Saturday's [Dec. 13] legal filing by the government included declarations from two top Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials. U.S. Border Patrol chief Rodney Scott said his agents have expelled 26 unaccompanied migrant children since Sullivan's order.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-border-officials-expelled-dozens-migrant-children-violation-court-order/>

‘Death to Asylum’ Rule Will Go Into Effect Days Before He Leaves Office

By Jennie Guilfoyle – *Immigration Impact* – December 10, 2020

- ❖ The administration has finalized a sweeping regulation that will effectively end asylum protection in the United States. The regulation, which was proposed in June, is set to go into effect on January 11—only nine days before President Trump leaves office. If implemented, it will mean that very few people fleeing persecution will be able to obtain refuge in the United States. Asylum protection (which stems from the United Nations Refugee Convention) has since 1980 been available to people fleeing persecution in their home countries on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, and membership in a particular social group. Because of the United States’ commitment to this humanitarian protection, there has always been a way for anyone who makes it here to apply for asylum, no matter how they arrive or enter the country—until this administration. The administration has blocked asylum seekers from entering the U.S. in multiple ways. This has included forcing asylum seekers to live in inhumane conditions for many months in Mexico and sending them to Guatemala without a hearing. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, asylum seekers have been expelled immediately under the pretext of “public health. It has issued attorney general decisions aimed at blocking certain groups (notably people fleeing gender-based, gang-based, or family-related violence) from getting asylum. It rejected asylum application forms for nonsensical reasons. And it has issued regulation after regulation aimed at making asylum impossible. Despite a massive public outpouring of over 80,000 comments opposing the proposed regulation, the administration pushed the rule forward at lightning speed. Implementation of this rule—set to take effect on January 11, 2021 just before the President leaves office—will make it nearly impossible for to obtain asylum in the U.S. The regulation imposes radical new bars and obstacles in almost every aspect of asylum law and procedure. Its guiding assumption is that asylum seekers are cheats and liars. Some of the more devastating provisions include:
 - Making it harder to pass the “credible fear” screening at the border.
 - Letting immigration judges deny asylum without a hearing.
 - Narrowing the definition of key terms like “political opinion,” “persecution,” and “particular social group.”
 - Barring asylum for people who traveled through more than one country on their way to the U.S.
 - Restricting the types of evidence that asylum seekers may present.
 - Letting immigration judges label many more asylum applications as “frivolous”—which has serious negative consequences for people who seek other immigration protections.
 - Restricting eligibility for protection based on a fear of torture.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://immigrationimpact.com/2020/12/10/trump-asylum-rule-2021/?emci=20a9d78c-f33b-eb11-9fb4-00155d43b2cd&emdi=5ae519ab-4f3d-eb11-9fb4-00155d43b2cd&ceid=8498148#.X9eLKI5IBbV>

Administration Finalizes Rule That Would Enforce ‘Near-Total Bans On Asylum’

By Chantal Da Silva – *Forbes* – December 10, 2020

- ❖ The administration has finalized a regulation that would impose sweeping limits on how asylum seekers can seek refuge in the United States. Under the 419-page rule put forward by the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice, the qualifications for gaining asylum in the U.S. would be raised significantly. While asylum seekers who claim to have a “credible fear of persecution or torture” if they are forced to return to their home country are currently considered eligible for asylum status, under the finalized rule, they would have to prove that they could face a “severe level of harm” if returned in order to be considered eligible to remain in the U.S. Under the new regulation, immigration judges would also have more reign to dismiss asylum applications as “frivolous”, meaning many asylum requests could be denied without a hearing. “The consequences of filing ‘frivolous’ applications for asylum are enormous,” Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, policy counsel at the American Immigration Council, said in a phone interview. Those whose applications are deemed frivolous will be “barred from applying for any form of relief, including any other visa or green card or benefit in the future,” he noted. “And under the new regulation, a wide variety of applications would be deemed frivolous,” Reichlin-Melnick, said. “Under this new rule, one of Trump’s last parting body blows to the United States’ system of humanitarian protection, none but the lucky few will be able to win asylum,” he said. “The regulation creates near-total bans on asylum for wide swathes of people and herculean procedural barriers,” he said. The new rule is set to go into effect on Monday, January 11, days before President-Elect Joe Biden’s inauguration.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/deloitte/2020/11/18/five-lessons-from-the-pandemic-light-a-path-forward-to-the-future-of-work/?sh=287cd9b976c1>
- ❖ To read the new asylum rule, go to: https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2020-26875.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Apprehensions Of Immigrant Children Have Increased, CBP Says

By Celine Castronuovo – The Hill – December 9, 2020

- ❖ The number of immigrant children and families being apprehended at the U.S.-Mexico border is increasing, according to data from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), posing a potential challenge for President-elect Joe Biden as he takes office next month. According to The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the increase Wednesday [Dec. 9], the coronavirus pandemic, as well as impacts of the Trump administration's 2019 policy limiting asylum claims in the U.S., resulted in a significant reduction in the flow of migrants from Latin America. However, CBP data show that in October, about 4,630 unaccompanied children were taken into custody by Southwest border patrol agents, an increase from 712 in April. The agency also noted that 4,501 migrants traveling with family members were apprehended in October, up from 716 in April. The Journal reported that a recent federal court filing made by the federal government showed that during a single six-day period in mid-November, roughly 1,000 children were taken into border patrol custody. This comes after CBP reported in October that border encounters had returned to traditional levels following a spike in 2019. CBP reported at the time that encounters with people crossing the border illegally decreased 53 percent in fiscal 2020, with 458,088 people encountered, down from 977,509 in fiscal 2019.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://thehill.com/latino/529509-apprehensions-of-immigrant-children-increase-posing-challenge-for-biden-administration>

FAMILY SEPARATIONS

Why Immigrant Advocates Still Can't Locate 628 Parents Separated In 2017

By Daniel Gonzalez – Arizona Republic – December 11, 2020

- ❖ Three years after the administration began separating migrant families at the southern border, immigrant advocates are still trying to track down 628 missing parents, according to a Dec. 2 status report filed jointly by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Trump administration lawyers. Of the missing parents, 333 were deported from the U.S., the majority of them to Guatemala, but also to Mexico, El Salvador and Honduras. Their children remain in the U.S. and are living with relatives or other sponsors scattered all over the country. The remaining 295 parents that haven't been located are believed still to be in the United States, according to the court filing and the ACLU. The main goal of immigrant advocates is to determine whether the parents are still in contact with their children in the U.S. At least 60 of the separated children whose parents remain missing were under the age of 5 when they were separated. The second goal is to help parents explore their legal recourses to reunite with their children. Under the Trump administration, those have been limited mostly to two options; having their child returned to their home countries, or allowing the child to remain in the U.S. with sponsors while they pursue asylum claims to remain in the U.S. permanently. Immigrant advocates, however, hope that under the incoming Biden administration there could be a third option: allowing deported parents to return to the U.S. to reunite with their separated children, something the Trump administration has refused to consider.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/immigration/2020/12/11/why-immigrant-advocates-still-cant-locate-628-parents-children-separated-2017-under-trumps-border-po/6411651002/>

DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA)

Obama-Era Program For Immigrants Faces New Court Challenge

By Nomaan Merchant – Associated Press – December 14, 2020

- ❖ A federal court on Tuesday [Dec. 15] will consider whether to invalidate a program that shields from deportation immigrants brought to the United States as children, potentially creating complications for the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden. The challenge to be heard in Houston concerns President Barack Obama's original memorandum creating Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, which currently covers about 650,000 people. Federal courts have already turned away President Donald Trump's efforts to end DACA. Under the order of a judge in New York, the Trump administration in December restored the program to its original terms under Obama, accepting new applications and full renewals of two-year work permits and general protections from deportation. But the Houston case directly targets DACA's original terms, not Trump's effort to end the program. Texas and eight other states sued to end DACA, arguing it drains state educational and healthcare resources and violates federal law. Leading the lawsuit is Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who frequently brings conservative legal challenges, including the case seeking to subvert Trump's election loss that was dismissed by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/obama-era-program-immigrants-faces-court-challenge-74729671>

U.S. Government Ordered To Reinstate Protections For 'Dreamers'

By Mimi Dwyer – Reuters – December 4, 2020

- ❖ In a rebuke to President Donald Trump's administration, a judge on Friday [Dec. 4] ordered the U.S. government to reopen to first-time applicants a program that protects from deportation and grants work permits to hundreds of thousands of immigrants who live in the United States unlawfully after arriving as children. The action by U.S. District Judge Nicholas Garaufis in Brooklyn centered on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program created by Trump's Democratic predecessor Barack Obama in 2012. The Supreme Court in June blocked Trump's 2017 bid to end DACA. His administration, however, continued its policy of not accepting new applications for the program. Democratic President-elect Joe Biden, who takes office on Jan. 20, has said he plans to revitalize DACA. Garaufis directed the Department of Homeland Security to post a public notice "displayed prominently" on its websites by Monday [Dec. 7] announcing that it is accepting new DACA applications. The judge also ordered that the notice make clear that employment authorization under DACA would last for two years rather than one. The Supreme Court decided that the administration's attempt to end DACA was "arbitrary and capricious" and violated federal law. Following the ruling, acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf in July issued a memo that continued to block new applications to the program while he subjected it to a "full reconsideration."
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-daca/u-s-government-ordered-to-reinstate-protections-for-dreamers-idUSKBN28F032>

DETENTION CENTERS

Millions Awarded To Companies With Checkered Records To Care For Migrant Children

By Priscilla Alvarez – CNN – December 8, 2020

- ❖ The administration awarded grants totaling \$58 million to two companies with checkered records to care for unaccompanied migrant children, according to a newly-released Senate report, which concluded that the department's failures could have endangered children. The findings from the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations are the latest in a string of reports concerning the care of unaccompanied migrant children, who, after being apprehended at the border, are transferred to the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services. The bipartisan report details grants from HHS to two companies -- VisionQuest National, Ltd. and New Horizon Group Home, LLC -- despite their previous issues over inadequate care. "HHS did not require either company to disclose prior adverse actions their respective state and local governments had taken against them, and the Department did not research the disciplinary history of either company," Tuesday's [Dec. 8] 59-page report states, adding that the oversights could've put children "trusted to the care of these companies" at risk. HHS funds a network of more than 100 shelters where migrant children who arrived in the United States without parents or guardians are provided care until they're released to sponsors. As of December 4, there are approximately 3,150 children currently in the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, an agency within HHS.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/millions-awarded-to-companies-with-checkered-records-to-care-for-migrant-children/ar-BB1bJEnh>

Judge Denounces Conduct At For-Profit ICE Detention Facility, Accuses Official Of Lying To Cover Up 'Deliberate Indifference' To The Lives Of Immigrants During Pandemic

By Charles Davis – Insider – December 4, 2020

- ❖ U.S. officials and their partners in the for-profit prison industry intentionally failed to protect immigrants detained at a facility in Northern California from COVID-19, "appalling" behavior that led to a "severe and prolonged outbreak" of the coronavirus, according to a federal judge. In an order released Thursday [Dec. 3], Judge Vince Chhabria of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California sided with a group of immigrant plaintiffs, backed by the American Liberties Union, who charged that officials at the Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center, privately run by The GEO Group, were grossly negligent in their approach to the pandemic. Indeed, Chhabria wrote, they "showed a deliberate indifference to the safety of the detainees." And they were dishonest about it, she said. For example, Alexander Pham, an officer with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement with responsibility for the Mesa Verde facility, earlier testified to the court that all new arrivals were being subject to a 14-day quarantine "when no such quarantine existed," Chhabria wrote. Officials also "deliberately avoided testing detainees and staff for fear that the results would require them to take expensive and logistically challenging safety measures," the judge said. According to ICE, there have been over 7,500 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among detained immigrants since the start of the pandemic, including 59 cases among detainees at the Mesa Verde facility; a third of the staff members there have also contracted the disease, including 15 in the past two weeks.
- ❖ News Article Source: https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/judge-denounces-conduct-at-for-profit-ice-detention-facility-accuses-official-of-lying-to-cover-up-deliberate-indifference-to-the-lives-of-immigrants-during-pandemic/ar-BB1bCda9?eType=EmailBlastContent%25252520%25252522%25252520target%2525253D%25252522_blank%25252522%2525253ERead%25252520the%25252520Article

L.A. Times Files Lawsuit Seeking Records On Abuse Claims At U.S. Immigration Detention Centers

By Andrea Castillo and Jie Jenny Zou – Los Angeles Times – December 1, 2020

- ❖ The Los Angeles Times on Tuesday [Dec. 1] sued the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, seeking the release of records detailing allegations of widespread sexual abuse and harassment at immigration detention centers. The lawsuit filed in federal court in Los Angeles followed a recent Times investigation that uncovered hundreds of allegations by detainees in California of violence and abuse. Few of the allegations resulted in criminal charges, a lack of accountability that fostered unchecked violence within the facilities. The Times was also among several outlets that reported on the alleged forced sterilization of over a dozen women at a detention center in Georgia. Tens of thousands of immigrants are held in detention centers across the U.S. as they await deportation proceedings, which can take months or years to be decided. Many are asylum seekers and have no criminal background. Others were arrested by ICE in targeted sweeps, or are green-card holders with criminal convictions. Starting in June, The Times submitted five requests under the Freedom of Information Act seeking detainee complaint data, investigation reports, and other detention policy documents from ICE and the DHS Office of Inspector General. Both agencies have failed to provide such records, leading to the lawsuit. The Freedom of Information Act guarantees access to a wide range of government records deemed fundamental to “the functioning of a democratic society.” Under the law, any member of the public may submit a request to a federal agency for documents. According to the Government Accountability Office, Homeland Security receives the most FOIA requests of all federal agencies, processing roughly 40% of all requests in any given year. The department has struggled to manage requests, often resulting in a backlog. DHS was named in 144 FOIA lawsuits in 2019, making it the second-most-sued federal agency after the U.S. Department of Justice, according to the FOIA Project.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-12-01/la-times-sues-for-federal-records-on-abuse-claims-ice-centers>

DEVELOPING STORIES

Sixty-Nine Percent Of Undocumented Immigrant Workers Have Jobs 'Essential' To Fighting Covid, Says Study

By Julia Ainsley – NBC News – December 16, 2020

- ❖ More than two-thirds of undocumented immigrant workers have frontline jobs considered "essential" to the U.S. fight against Covid-19, according to a new study released Wednesday [Dec. 16] by pro-immigration reform group FWD.US. Sixty-nine percent of undocumented immigrant workers have jobs deemed essential by the Department of Homeland Security, according to the study, which is based on the 2019 American Community Survey by the Census Bureau. The study also estimated that nearly one in five essential workers is an immigrant. Undocumented immigrants make up 11 percent of agriculture workers, 2 percent of healthcare workers and 6 percent of food services and production workers, the study estimated. The study also found that 70 percent of the immigrants working in essential jobs have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years and 60 percent speak English. Nearly one million of the essential workers are "Dreamers" protected by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the study found.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/sixty-nine-percent-undocumented-immigrant-workers-have-jobs-essential-fighting-n1251390>
- ❖ To read the FWD.us study, go to: <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrant-essential-workers/>

Biden's Pledges Could Spur More Migration. But In A Pandemic, The Border Is Unprepared

By Mimi Dwyer, Ted Hesson, Laura Gottesdiener – Reuters - December 15, 2020

- ❖ Thousands of newly hopeful migrants in Central America have recently joined WhatsApp and Facebook groups dedicated to organizing northbound caravans, slated to begin leaving the region in the coming weeks. Biden's Jan. 20 inauguration is a frequent topic. "Remember, Trump leaves on the 20th," one person wrote in a group planning to leave Honduras on Jan. 15. "If people arrive before then, they'll have problems." U.S. border officials and shelter directors along the border are concerned about the effects of a major surge in migration in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, as is the Biden transition team, people familiar with the team's discussions said. The Biden campaign website says the new administration will "dramatically increase U.S. government resources to support migrants awaiting assessment of their asylum claims and to the organizations providing for their needs." The Biden transition team has been meeting with advocates to listen to suggestions for how to cope with a surge, a source familiar with the discussions told Reuters. Migrant advocates interviewed by Reuters said they have yet to receive concrete commitments from incoming officials. Biden has promised "on day one" of his administration to end the Migrant Protection Protocols, or MPP, the controversial program implemented in 2019 that forced tens of thousands of other asylum seekers to wait in Mexico pending U.S. immigration court hearings. The Biden transition has not yet said if it plans to repeal a separate COVID-19-related order put in place by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in March that allows U.S. authorities to quickly expel almost all border crossers.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN28P18G>

Year In Review: The Policies That Had The Biggest Impact On Immigrants In 2020

By Boundless Immigration Inc. – December 14, 2020

- ❖ Here are the key immigration stories from the past year:
 - **COVID-19:** The administration used the crisis to justify sweeping travel and immigration restrictions. In April, the administration issued an executive order halting the issuance of certain classes of green cards, including some family and employment-based visas, a measure that Boundless estimates will lead to the exclusion of 358,000 people per year from the United States. In June, the administration issued an additional proclamation banning many skilled workers, seasonal workers, exchange visitors, and employees of multinational companies.
 - **The public charge rule:** The rule increased the administrative burden on visa applicants — and with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) erroneously using the rule to block prior green card applicants, the rule also dramatically increased stress levels for anyone dealing with immigration filings in 2020. Legal challenges to the rule continued throughout the year, and in December the Ninth Circuit temporarily blocked the rule's application in 18 states.
 - **DACA:** In June, the Supreme Court issued a historic ruling reinstating the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, allowing more than 700,000 young people brought to the United States as children to continue to live and work lawfully. Just one month later, however, the Department of Homeland Security published a memo barring new applicants from receiving DACA status, barring current recipients from receiving advance parole to travel internationally, and changing the duration of DACA status from two years to one year. In December, a judge struck down the memo and ordered the DHS to begin accepting new applicants, fully restoring the DACA program.
 - **Asylum seekers and refugees:** After the COVID-19 pandemic began, border and immigration officials used public health rules to turn away tens of thousands of asylum seekers from the U.S. border with Mexico. The United States continued to require tens of thousands of asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their cases were considered, a policy the Supreme Court is now scrutinizing. In October, the administration reduced the refugee cap for fiscal 2021 to just 15,000 — a record low, and a fraction of the 110,000 refugees permitted by Obama in 2016 — and proposed barring most refugees from Somalia, Syria, and Yemen.
 - **Trouble at USCIS:** U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has faced financial problems in recent years. Last year, the agency sought to implement dramatic fee increases, including a doubling of the fee for marriage-based green cards and a 60% hike in fees for naturalization. In September 2020, just days before the new schedule was enacted, a judge blocked the fee hike. USCIS also threatened to furlough 13,400 employees to offset the budget shortfall.
 - **New requirements for visa applicants:** During 2020, USCIS introduced numerous measures designed to complicate the process of seeking visas, citizenship, or immigration benefits. In January, USCIS announced new “secure mail” rules requiring immigrants to personally take delivery of work permits, green cards, and other immigration documents. In August, it emerged that USCIS had begun rejecting applications on which any field was left blank, even if the question obviously didn't apply to the applicant. And in September, the administration announced plans to require DNA, retinal scans, and other expanded biometrics data from immigrants, including children, and also their sponsors.
 - **A tougher path to citizenship:** USCIS staffing shortages, red tape, and office closures also took a toll on would-be citizens, with Boundless finding that bureaucratic delays robbed almost 300,000 eligible applicants of their chance to naturalize in time to vote in the November presidential election. In November, the administration exacerbated the problem by announcing a complex, lengthy, and politically conservative civics test, in a move expected to further slow USCIS processing of naturalization cases. The Justice Department also established a new office with the sole purpose of stripping foreign-born Americans of their citizenship.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.boundless.com/blog/2020-immigration-policies/>



Migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. queue for food at an encampment of more than 2,000 migrants, as local authorities prepare to respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Matamoros, Mexico March 20, 2020.

Photo Credit: REUTERS/Daniel Becerril/File Photo

Officials Are Preparing For A Migration Surge At U.S.-Mexico Border, Texas Congressman Says

By Matt Cannon – NewsWeek – December 13, 2020

- ❖ Border officials are preparing for a significant rise in the number of people arriving at the nation's border with Mexico, a Texas congressman has said. Rep. Henry Cuellar said he had been briefed that cartels in Central America are telling people the border "will be open" after President-elect Joe Biden's election victory last month. He said the groups were "promoting and staging" migration to the U.S. by claiming Biden's administration would be more lenient over asylum claims than the Trump administration. Cuellar said he has not been given estimates of how many people are expected to travel from Central America to the U.S. border, however he told Border Force he thought it would be fewer than the thousands who crossed from Honduras to Guatemala in 2018. Some caravans are reportedly moving north after forming in Honduras, where hurricanes have left thousands of people homeless. A few hundred Hondurans—mostly younger people, and women with child—formed a caravan bound for the U.S. on Wednesday, Reuters reported this week. It followed calls on social media to organize the group, the news agency reported. DHS Acting Secretary Chad Wolf is scheduled to travel to Panama and El Salvador next week, in order to "discuss broader security issues impacting the region." Mexican foreign affairs officials have committed to shoring up security at Mexico's southern border with Guatemala, Cuellar said. "They still want to continue securing their southern border, which I think is good for us," he added.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/officials-are-preparing-for-a-migration-surge-at-us-mexico-border-texas-congressman-says/ar-BB1bTils>

Hondurans Forming Migrant Caravan For US Stopped In Homeland

By Claudio Escalón – Associated Press – December 10, 2020

- ❖ Hundreds of Hondurans trying to start a new caravan to reach the U.S. border were stopped by Honduran security personnel Thursday [Dec. 10] before they even reached the border with neighboring Guatemala. The Honduran police and immigration agents asked their countrymen to show travel documents and proof of negative coronavirus tests, which none appeared to have. Many of the migrants said that two recent hurricanes had devastated their homes or livelihoods, and they set out late Wednesday on a trek toward Guatemala, Mexico and the U.S. border. Last week, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández himself visited Washington and warned of possible food shortages as a result of the storms. The roughly 600 men, women and children had gathered Wednesday [Dec. 9] night in the northern city of San Pedro Sula and began walking along a dark highway toward the border with Guatemala. But as they approached the border crossing at Agua Caliente, the Honduran agents said they couldn't continue without documents. According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, more than 4.3 million Central Americans, including 3 million Hondurans, were affected by Hurricane Eta alone. Those numbers only rose when Iota, another Category 4 storm, hit the region. While some caravans in 2018 and 2019 made it to the U.S. border, the most recent attempts have routinely been stopped. In October, security forces in neighboring Guatemala turned back another large group of Hondurans who tried to abandon their country.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.chron.com/news/amp/Hundreds-of-Hondurans-gather-to-walk-in-caravan-15791694.php>

Women engineers start group to improve life at migrant camp

By Nubia Reyna – Brownsville Herald – December 6, 2020

- ❖ A lot of things have changed at the migrant camp in Matamoros since engineers Erin Hughes, Chloe Rastatter and Christa Cook arrived. They decided to volunteer their time and improve the quality of life of those living there by partnering with other organizations such as Team Brownsville to build hand washing stations, construct showers, manage solar power for field hospitals, dig over 1000 feet of drainage channels and more. The three engineers recently formed their organization called "Solidarity Engineering" to respond to the needs of those living at the migrant camp. Hughes, Rastatter and Cook met at the border after listening to the same podcast that talked about the camp back in 2019. Hughes started volunteering from her home in Philadelphia but felt that what she was doing was not enough and decided to quit her job, move to Brownsville and volunteer full-time at the camp in Matamoros. Ever since they arrived, the three women engineers have partnered with Global Response Management, Team Brownsville and the Resource Center in Matamoros to filtrate water; redesign and fix showers; dig over 1,000 feet of drainage channels and berms throughout the camp to direct stormwater to the river and out of peoples' tents and living areas; fundraise, locally source and build a 30 foot by 24 foot playground for 300 kids, among many more. When asked about the importance of helping the asylum seekers at the camp, Hughes said we are all human and those living there have risked their lives to get to the border and the U.S. closed their doors to them.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.brownsvilleherald.com/2020/12/06/women-engineers-start-group-improve-life-migrant-camp/>