

# NEWS ARTICLES ON KEY ISSUES - JUNE 10, 2021

## LATEST NEWS

### **Biden Administration: Over 3,900 Children Separated Under Trump 'Zero-Tolerance' Policy**

*By Rebecca Morin, USA TODAY, June 8, 2021*

- ❖ According to findings from the Reunification of Families Task Force, 3,913 children were separated between July 2017 and January 2021. Activists had previously put that number at over 5,000 children. Indeed, the task force determined a total of 5,636 children were separated between July 1, 2017, and Jan. 20, 2021. However, only 3,913 were separated under zero-tolerance-related policies, according to the task force. There are still 1,723 children whose separations remain under review. A DHS official said that with the help of nongovernmental organizations, 1,779 children were reunited with parents in the U.S. under past court orders due. Seven additional children were reunited over the last 30 days through the task force and NGO coordination, the official said. The DHS official said there are 2,127 children for whom the task force does not have a confirmed record of reunification.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/06/08/dhs-task-force-children-separated-trump-zero-tolerance-policy/7594577002/>

### **U.S. Threatens Legal Action Against Texas On Shelter Closures**

*By Adriana Gomez Licon, Associated Press, June 8, 2021*

- ❖ The Biden administration threatened Monday [June 7] to pursue legal action if Texas Gov. Greg Abbott doesn't rescind his order shutting down federally funded shelters that house migrant children who cross the U.S.-Mexico border without their parents. In a letter obtained by The Associated Press, the deputy general counsel for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services told the Republican governor that even though the state issues the licenses for the shelter, Congress has tasked his agency with caring for unaccompanied children. The letter urges Abbott to clarify by June 11 whether his proclamation applies to 52 shelters that are licensed by the state but funded with federal grants. More than half of migrant children sheltered by the U.S. government in licensed facilities are in Texas. The last census taken on May 19 showed 4,223 children in the facilities of about 7,000 in the entire network of licensed shelters. As of Sunday [June 6], there are still about 16,000 children in HHS custody, and the federal government has struggled to increase the number of beds in licensed shelters, which are preferred by advocates.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/article/texas-immigration-d3fa1901c3bfdde1923a3c22d9b60e39>

### **Texas Push To Close Shelters For Migrant Kids Alarms Groups**

*By Adriana Gomez Licon and Acacia Coronado, Associated Press, June 2, 2021*

- ❖ A move by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to shutter more than 50 shelters housing about 4,000 migrant children could seriously disrupt a national program that already faces strained capacity to properly care for minors crossing the U.S.-Mexico border alone. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which cares for migrant children, said Wednesday [June 2] that it did not intend to close any facilities but that it was "assessing" the Republican governor's late Tuesday [June 1] disaster declaration. The proclamation directs a state agency to deny or discontinue within 90 days licenses for child care facilities sheltering migrant children. Abbott argues that the federal government can't force Texas to keep issuing state licenses in response to a federal problem. The U.S. government funds 56 shelters in Texas, out of about 200 licensed shelters in the country. The agency was directed to remove the licenses and sent a notice to providers Wednesday [June 2] telling them to wind down operations by Aug. 30.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/texas-push-close-shelters-migrant-kids-alarms-groups-78050029>

### **Governor Abbott Issues Disaster Declaration In Response To Border Crisis In Texas**

*By the Office of the Texas Governor, June 1, 2021*

- ❖ On June 1, Governor Greg Abbott issued a disaster declaration along Texas' southern border in response to the border crisis, providing more resources and strategies to combat the ongoing influx of unlawful immigrants. The Governor is authorizing the use of all necessary and available state and local resources to protect landowners in these counties from trespassers and the damage they cause to private property. The Governor has also directed the Texas Department of Public Safety to enforce all federal and state criminal laws, including criminal trespassing, smuggling, and human trafficking. The Governor directed the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to take all necessary steps to discontinue state licensure of any child care facility under a contract with the federal government that shelters or detains unlawful immigrants.
- ❖ Press Release Source: <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-issues-disaster-declaration-in-response-to-border-crisis-in-texas>
- ❖ To read the Governor's disaster declaration, go to: [https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/DISASTER\\_border\\_security\\_IMAGE\\_05-31-2021.pdf](https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/DISASTER_border_security_IMAGE_05-31-2021.pdf)

## U.S. Formally Ends Trump's 'Remain In Mexico' Asylum Policy

By Ted Hesson, Reuters, June 1, 2021

- ❖ The U.S. has formally ended the Trump-era “remain in Mexico” (RIM) policy, which forced tens of thousands of Central American asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico for U.S. court cases, according to a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) memo sent to agency leaders on Tuesday [June 1]. The administration of President Joe Biden paused the program, known as the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), shortly after he took office on Jan. 20. Since then, more than 11,000 migrants enrolled in it have been allowed to enter the U.S. to pursue asylum claims.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-border/u-s-formally-ends-trumps-remain-in-mexico-asylum-policy-idUSKCN2DD4DG>
- ❖ To read the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) memo, go to: [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/21\\_0601\\_termination\\_of\\_mpp\\_program.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/21_0601_termination_of_mpp_program.pdf)

## Interfaith Welcome Coalition In San Antonio Volunteers Help Immigrants Seeking Asylum Reach Final Destinations

By Vincent T. Davis, San Antonio Express-News, June 1, 2021

- ❖ Each week, volunteers from the Interfaith Welcome Coalition help men, women, children and families from across the world navigate the immigration process. Each family receives a free backpack filled with snacks, water and toiletries. The little ones get stuffed toys. Everyone is given a box lunch before heading to their flights. Wearing blue vests with the coalition's name printed in white letters on the back, the volunteers recorded connecting flights and final destinations on a pink information sheet the travelers carry on their trip. The form also includes details about immigration court dates, phone numbers for legal counsel and a U.S. map. Victoria Salas, coordinating director, said the humanitarian initiative began in the summer of 2014 to help unaccompanied minors from Central America detained at the U.S.-Mexico border. The Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement notify the coalition daily about how many families and individuals to expect at the airport and bus station. The coalition also works with other agencies coordinating migrant services within the community. The organization uses donations and grants to pay for immigrants in need of tickets or a place to stay until their departure. Salas said the group often sends funds to border organizations to help them provide services for immigrants. The coalition includes community organizations, students and various faith groups. The nonprofit is always seeking volunteers, especially with the increased number of immigrants being released from detention centers. Most volunteers speak Spanish or another language, but it's not a requirement. Shifts are from 10 p.m. to midnight at the bus station and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the airport. Volunteers work two-hour shifts, but some stay as long as eight hours to help late arrivals.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Interfaith-Welcome-Coalition-in-San-Antonio-16216897.php#photo-21065940>



Barbara Edens, left, talks with fellow Interfaith Welcome Coalition volunteer, Sally Andrade, while helping migrants at the San Antonio International Airport.

Credit: Jerry Lara /San Antonio Express-News

## Biden Aims To Rebuild And Expand Legal Immigration

By Michael D. Shear and Zolan Kanno-Youngs, New York Times, May 31, 2021

- ❖ A 46-page draft blueprint obtained by The New York Times maps out the Biden administration's plans to significantly expand the legal immigration system. The blueprint, dated May 3 and titled “D.H.S. Plan to Restore Trust in Our Legal Immigration System,” lists scores of initiatives intended to reopen the country to more immigrants. Divided into seven sections, the document offers detailed policy proposals that would help more foreigners move to the United States, including high-skilled workers, trafficking victims, the families of Americans living abroad, American Indians born in Canada, refugees, asylum-seekers and farm workers. Immigrants who apply online could pay less in fees or even secure a waiver in an attempt to “reduce barriers” to immigration. A central element of the blueprint is addressing backlogs in the immigration system. The administration is planning to fast-track immigration applications by expanding virtual interviews and electronic filing, as well as limiting the requests for evidence from applicants. Mr. Biden wants to restore opportunities for foreign employees through the existing H-1B visa program, which is intended for workers with special skills. The administration also intends to create new pathways for foreign entrepreneurs who wish to “start-up businesses and create jobs for U.S. workers,” according to the document. Mr. Biden is also aiming to expand immigration opportunities for L.G.B.T.Q. refugees from countries where they are persecuted or where same-sex marriages are not recognized. In addition, he wants to revamp a program that provides a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who help law enforcement by cooperating with police or testifying in court.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/31/us/politics/biden-immigration.html>

## ASYLUM SEEKERS

### Editorial: Now That One Cruel Policy Is Over, Reform Asylum Laws

By the Express-News Editorial Board, June 6, 2021

- ❖ An estimated 11,000 people subjected to the Migrant Protection Protocols have been allowed into the U.S. since President Joe Biden paused the program. Of the nearly 400 patients treated by Doctors Without Borders in the Mexican border city of Nuevo Laredo during the first five months of 2019, more than 45 percent endured at least one episode of violence, including about 12 percent who were kidnapped. An estimated 68,000 migrants, most of them from Central America, were returned to Mexico under the policy, according to DHS. More than 178,000 migrants were apprehended in April, up from 100,104 in March, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/editorial/article/Editorial-Now-that-one-cruel-policy-is-over-16225803.php>

### Biden Gives ICE Attorneys More Discretion To Drop Immigration Cases

By Rebecca Beitsch, The Hill, June 4, 2021

- ❖ The Biden administration is giving immigration prosecutors more discretion over which cases to pursue or even drop, a move that could limit the new cases funneling into the overwhelmed immigration court system. A memo to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) prosecutors allows the agency's lawyers to drop cases against green card holders and those who are elderly, pregnant or have serious health conditions or have been in the U.S. from an early age, according to a memo obtained by The Hill. It also advises lawyers to weigh other "compelling humanitarian factors," like whether a defendant is a caregiver or the victim of a crime. The move comes as the immigration court backlog has swollen to 1.3 million cases — a figure that more than doubled under the Trump administration — and where those whose future hangs in limbo are often stuck waiting years for their cases to resolve.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/556946-biden-gives-ice-attorneys-more-discretion-to-drop-immigration-cases>

### Exclusive: Biden Has Quietly Deployed An App For Asylum Seekers. Privacy Experts Are Worried

By Molly O'Toole, Los Angeles Times, June 4, 2021

- ❖ U.S. border officials have taken an unprecedented step, quietly deploying a new app, CBP One, which relies on controversial facial recognition, geolocation and cloud technology to collect, process and store sensitive information on asylum seekers before they enter the United States, according to three privacy-impact assessments conducted by the Homeland Security Department and experts who reviewed them for The Times. Several experts who reviewed the privacy assessments said the Customs and Border Protection app raised alarms about unchecked data collection and surveillance by the government on vulnerable migrants who had little choice but to consent. U.S. border officials have already enlisted international and nongovernmental organizations, such as the United Nations refugee agency, known as UNHCR, to use the app. The organizations identify asylum seekers in Mexico who were subjected to the Trump-era policies and then submit their biographic and biometric information, including photographs, through the app to Customs and Border Protection. CBP primarily uses facial recognition to verify the information and determine whether the asylum seekers will be allowed to enter the United States to pursue their claims.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-06-04/asylum-bidens-got-an-app-for-that-with-privacy-risks-and-surveillance-beyond-border>

### U.S. Border Officers Are Collecting DNA From Asylum-Seekers Even Though They Don't Have Criminal Records

By Adolfo Flores, BuzzFeed News, June 4, 2021

- ❖ Although he was uncomfortable, David didn't push back when a U.S. border officer in Texas told him to swab his cheek in order to collect his DNA. The Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer asked David to rub a swab on the inside of his cheeks and moments later placed it in a small envelope. It was a small portion of the three-hour process David had to undergo before being allowed into the U.S. David's DNA was expected to be sent to the FBI's Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), the result of a Trump-era rule that allowed the Department of Homeland Security to collect samples from asylum-seekers as part of the DNA Fingerprint Act of 2005. The DNA Fingerprint Act of 2005 directed federal law enforcement agencies to collect DNA from arrestees and from immigrants detained by the U.S. Initially, DHS had been exempt from collecting DNA from detained immigrants, but the Trump administration changed that by proposing a rule in October 2019 that took away the DHS secretary's authority to exclude certain groups, like detained immigrants. In a statement, the DHS said it was required to collect DNA samples from everyone in its custody who has been arrested on federal charges and from immigrants detained under its authority in order to comply with the DNA Fingerprint Act of 2005. CBP began collecting DNA in January 2020 as part of a pilot program and its collection efforts were fully operational by the end of last year, DHS said. In addition to collecting DNA, the DHS has been having immigrants install tracking apps on their phones in favor of having them wear ankle monitors.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adolfoflores/asylum-seekers-dna-us-border>

## **A New Plan By The Biden Administration Will Speed Up Court Cases For Families Crossing The Border**

*By Hamed Aleaziz, BuzzFeed News, May 28, 2021*

- ❖ The Biden administration is launching a new effort Friday [May 28] at immigration courts in 10 cities across the U.S. to speed up cases for immigrant families who are picked up by agents after crossing the southern border. The plan, which will begin in Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New York City, San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle, comes as a growing number of families have been able to cross the border and remain in the U.S. The so-called dedicated docket plan will apply to certain immigrant families who are arrested after crossing the border on or after Friday [May 28]. The families will not be detained but will be monitored by immigration officials through the alternatives to detention program. The Biden administration selected the cities, officials said, because of the number of available judges to handle the cases, along with a robust network of legal providers available to help the arriving immigrants. The courts will attempt to issue a decision within 300 days of an initial hearing.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/biden-plan-speed-up-family-immigration-court-cases>

## **FAMILY SEPARATIONS**

### **DHS Formally Bans Family Separations For Illicit Border Crossings**

*By Rafael Bernal, The Hill, May 28, 2021*

- ❖ Homeland Security officials on Friday [May 28] formally banned separating children from parents who are caught illegally crossing U.S. border, as part of an effort by the Biden administration to revert the effects of former President Trump's "zero tolerance" policy. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Acting Commissioner Troy Miller issued a memo to the heads of Border Patrol and CBP's Office of Field Operations prohibiting the separation of children from their parents or guardians for convictions on illegal entry to the United States, and banning the referral of parents for prosecution exclusively on the grounds of illegal entry to the country. According to a report by NBC News, the families of 391 children separated under the Trump-era policy have yet to be found, out of more than 5,500 families separated between 2017 and 2018.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://thehill.com/latino/556060-dhs-formally-bans-family-separations-for-illicit-border-crossings?rl=1>

## **DETENTION CENTERS**

### **Trial To Determine If GEO Must Pay Detainees Minimum Wage**

*By Gene Johnson, Associated Press, June 1, 2021*

- ❖ After nearly four years of litigation and pandemic-related delays, a trial is underway to determine whether the GEO Group must pay minimum wage to detainees who perform cooking, cleaning and other tasks at its immigration detention center in Washington State. Detainees are typically paid \$1 per day when they work shifts in the Voluntary Work Program at the for-profit Northwest detention center in Tacoma. The state's minimum wage is now \$13.69 per hour. Attorney General Bob Ferguson and some detainees filed separate lawsuits against GEO in 2017, arguing that the company's contract with the federal government requires it to follow state and local laws — including Washington's Minimum Wage Act — and that GEO, one of the nation's largest private detention companies, unjustly profited by paying so little. Tacoma-based U.S. District Judge Robert Bryan, who has rejected several attempts by GEO to dismiss the lawsuits, consolidated the cases for trial, which he is conducting via Zoom because of the pandemic.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-minimum-wage-business-immigration-trials-dab22ca125ee9dfa8898a008e2fa93b>

### **Workers Describe Sprawling Tent City, 'Deeply Alarming' Conditions For Kids At Fort Bliss Shelter**

*By Lauren Villagran, El Paso Times, May 27, 2021*

- ❖ More than 4,300 children who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border alone are being held in what official and inside sources say are dangerous and distressing conditions at an emergency shelter at Fort Bliss. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services erected an "emergency intake site" for unaccompanied migrant children on the Army base in El Paso nine weeks ago. U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-El Paso), child advocates and federal and contract workers inside the facility say the site is being poorly managed and children are suffering. They say children are languishing for weeks without speaking to a caseworker who can reunite them with a sponsor in the U.S.; that COVID-19, other infectious diseases and lice have grown rampant; that some contract caregivers lack adequate training to work with the children, aged 13 to 17, temporarily housed there. Children are receiving hot meals but are eating a repetitive diet, sources say, and some have inadequate access to showers and clean clothes.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/2021/05/27/migrant-children-shelter-el-paso-fort-bliss-conditions-unacceptable/7446897002/>

## DEVELOPING STORIES

### Courts Drowning In Backlog Pose Lingering Immigration Challenge

By Rebecca Beitsch, *The Hill*, June 6, 2021

- ❖ The immigration court system, run by the Department of Justice (DOJ), has 1.3 million cases already on the docket, including people facing deportation, those hoping to gain asylum after fleeing persecution abroad and those who, even if they overstayed a visa, may be entitled to a green card. The White House has been eyeing administrative fixes, including a memo to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) prosecutors released Friday [June 4] giving them greater discretion to drop cases and outlining a number of criteria to help steer the agency's lawyers away from the deportation cases that surged under Trump.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/556933-courts-drowning-in-backlog-pose-lingering-immigration-challenge>

### Foster And Migrant Kids Shut Out From Covid Vaccinations

By Sarah Owerhohle, *Politico*, May 30, 2021

- ❖ Nearly a half-million foster children in the U.S. and unaccompanied migrant teens at the southern border could be prevented from receiving coronavirus vaccines because of federal and state consent laws that require a parent or guardian's approval. Vaccine consent laws vary across states. Most state welfare agencies let current guardians make decisions for routine care such as federally approved and recommended vaccines; in some areas, such as Washington D.C., children above the age of 11 can make vaccination decisions themselves. But the vast majority of states require parental consent.
- ❖ News Article Source: <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/05/30/migrant-children-coronavirus-vaccine-491412>

### Biden Budget Reflects Shift In U.S. Immigration Policy And Border Enforcement

By Nick Miroff and Maria Sacchetti, *Washington Post*, May 28, 2021

- ❖ President Biden's immigration policy changes took shape Friday [May 28] in a budget request that would eliminate border-wall funding, boost spending on care for unaccompanied migrant children to \$3.3 billion and overhaul the way asylum seekers are handled at the Mexican border by dramatically increasing staffing to process their claims. The budget projects that ICE would deport 167,420 immigrants in fiscal 2022, the same estimate as the prior year's proposal, and would fund 32,500 detention beds, down from 34,000 the prior year. The Biden administration also would add 100 new immigration judges, provide funding to reduce the backlog of 1.2 million cases in the immigration courts, and increase access to legal aid for children and families. The biggest change in Biden's DHS budget is the elimination of \$1.5 billion in border-wall funding. Biden's proposed budget would fortify U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency that processes immigrants' applications for citizenship, green cards and other legal benefits. His budget request would add more than 1,300 positions and \$345 million to reduce backlogs, and process up to 125,000 refugee admissions next year.
- ❖ News Article Source: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/biden-border-wall-immigration-budget/2021/05/28/18836084-bff0-11eb-9bae-5a86187646fe\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/biden-border-wall-immigration-budget/2021/05/28/18836084-bff0-11eb-9bae-5a86187646fe_story.html)

### Biden's Border Policy: Who Gets In? Who's Shut Out?

By ProPublica in partnership with the Texas Tribune, May 27, 2021

- ❖ To watch a recording of this event, go to: [https://www.propublica.org/events/bidens-border-policy-who-gets-in-whos-shut-out?mc\\_cid=9f2eb51d10&mc\\_eid=edd6c04dd3](https://www.propublica.org/events/bidens-border-policy-who-gets-in-whos-shut-out?mc_cid=9f2eb51d10&mc_eid=edd6c04dd3)
- ❖ To read the ProPublica and Texas Tribune story titled "Border Policy Is Getting More and More Convoluted. That's Creating False Hope for Migrants", go to: <https://www.propublica.org/article/border-policy-is-getting-more-and-more-convoluted-thats-creating-false-hope-for-migrants>

### Many Immigrant Families With Children Continued To Avoid Public Benefits In 2020, Despite Facing Hardships

By Jennifer M. Haley, Genevieve M. Kenney, Hamutal Bernstein and Dulce Gonzalez, *Urban Institute*, May 26, 2021

- ❖ According to new research from the Urban Institute think tank, 1 in 5 adults in immigrant families with children (20.0 percent) and almost 3 in 10 of those in low-income immigrant families with children (28.8 percent) reported that they or a family member avoided one or more noncash public benefits or other help with basic needs in 2020 because of concerns about green card status or other immigration-related reasons.
- ❖ To read the report, go to: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/many-immigrant-families-children-continued-avoid-public-benefits-2020-despite-facing-hardships>