

May 1, 2024

To: Interested Parties

From: Catalyze/Citizens

Re: **How President Biden Can Meet the American Electorate's Demands on Immigration**

In contrast to previous election cycles, the issue of immigration has risen as one of the top concerns for a majority of Americans, in large part because of decades of congressional inaction and relentless right-wing political attacks. The latest attempt to pass bipartisan legislation in Congress to address the situation on the border was undermined by the presumptive Republican nominee, seemingly leaving President Biden without any other recourse than to take administrative action. We readily recognize that the president must continue to use his authority to increase capacity to manage migration and resource federal law enforcement and government agencies to increase screening and apprehension of drugs and fentanyl at the border. **Equally, the Biden administration has a critical opportunity to appeal to key voters in battleground states, including Biden's 2020 coalition of supporters such as independents, youth, Latino, and Black voters, by also delivering popular immigration solutions that provide legal pathways for Dreamers and long-settled undocumented families in the U.S, including family caregivers, spouses of American citizens, and workers who have long contributed to the country.**

Consistently, polling by media and advocacy organizations has found that a majority of voters support a balanced compromise to fixing our immigration system – sensible border security policies and a pathway to citizenship. In fact, an enforcement-only approach fails to gain support against a balanced approach that includes legal pathways for America's immigrant communities. There is also strong opposition to Donald Trump's immigration platform, particularly family separation and mass deportation.

A [new battleground poll](#) commissioned by Catalyze/Citizens and conducted by Global Strategy Group and BSP Research found that **66% battleground voters prefer a balanced approach** to the immigration system and report high levels of support for policies addressing both border security and paths to citizenship and legal status for long-settled undocumented immigrants.

- **82% support creating pathways to citizenship for immigrants** who have been living in the U.S. for many years and pass a background check and pay taxes.
- **74% of battleground voters** (84% of Hispanic voters) support expanding the ability for family caregivers to stay here legally.
- **73% of voters** also support allowing undocumented immigrants married to a U.S. citizen or legal resident to live here with legal status.
- **91% support** investing in increased screening capacity at the border to find fentanyl and other illegal drugs.
- **89% support** improving technology and infrastructure at the border.
- **58% of voters, including 69% of Latino voters**, find it concerning that “Donald Trump and Republicans want to bring back cruel policies that do nothing to secure the border or fix our immigration system, including the inhumane family separation policy that separated children from their parents at the border.”
- **58% of voters, including 68% of Latino voters**, also find it concerning that “Donald Trump and Republicans have consistently used fear, hate, and racism in the way they speak about immigrants – which has emboldened white supremacists and MAGA extremists and made immigrants targets for hate and violence.”

- 54% of voters, including 87% of Democrats and 67% of Latinos, additionally find it concerning that Trump will “conduct sweeping raids across the country to separate families, round up and deport millions of people, including Dreamers who came here as children, and others who have lived and worked here for decades
- In a [March GSG poll](#), battleground voters opposed family separation (65%) and banning asylum (55%).
- On par with these findings, the *Wall St. Journal* [found](#) that 59% of voters support the bipartisan border deal while 74% of voters support a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, 66% of voters support a mechanism for Dreamers to become U.S. citizens, and 58% of voters support an increase in legal immigration.

Despite the strong support for legal pathways, Trump and Republicans continue to attack President Biden and Democrats on the airwaves, nearly \$40 million on anti-immigrant television ads across ten battleground states, going as far as vowing to deport Dreamers and immigrant families en masse. In response, the Biden administration should seize the opportunity to meet the demands of the American electorate and excite his 2020 coalition by taking decisive action to expand legal pathways for Dreamers, family caregivers, and immigrants who are integral to mixed-status American families and our nation’s economy.

As Congress continues to block border security funds, the administration should consider border security measures, such as expanded efforts to tackle fentanyl and drugs at the border. In addition to these border security actions, the administration should consider the following in order to keep a balanced approach that both secures the border and provides relief to long-term residents:

1. **A Legal Pathway for America’s Family Caregivers.** The administration should allow more family caregivers to access an existing path to work authorization and legal status, allowing thousands of long-settled individuals in mixed-status families to stay together and contribute to their family and communities. The administration can make a program currently on the books more accessible to thousands of long-term residents who meet the requirements of living in the U.S. for 10 years, passing criminal background checks, and having U.S. citizen or resident relatives who would face serious hardship if the applicant were removed. Many Dreamers, including DACA recipients, could be among those who qualify for work permits and eventually permanent residency if the rule were to be updated. Letters from both [House](#) and [Senate](#) leaders, as well as 24 of the nation’s largest [Hispanic civil rights organizations](#) have called on the administration to implement this form of relief.

Action: The Biden administration should quickly move forward with [proposing and finalizing a rule](#), opening access to the path for America’s family caregivers to stay together.

2. **Citizenship for Spouses.** According to The Migration Policy Institute, an [estimated 1.3 million](#) Americans are married to a spouse who is undocumented. Today, many of these immigrant spouses of American citizens, including many Dreamers, cannot adjust status under current law. It doesn’t have to be this way: the administration should explore all its options— from its parole and deferred action authorities, to amending existing work permit regulations — to allow them to work and live here lawfully.

Action: The administration should grant parole to these families. The administration has signaled its intent to do rulemaking around adjustment of status issues, and as it moves forward with its [proposed regulation](#), it should, as a matter of parity, also update its work authorization regulations to allow people with pending “provisional waivers” to apply for work permits as they inch through very long backlogs.

3. **Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ecuador, DRC, Nicaragua, Guatemala and all other nations that qualify and redesignations for Haiti and Venezuela.** People from these countries have been living in the U.S. and have established roots, been paying taxes, and many have U.S. citizen children and other family members. In fact, the majority of Americans (73%) support legal pathways for long-settled immigrants who have lived here for many years.

A recent poll by FWD.us and SEIU found:

- A strong majority (66% support/25% oppose) support the TPS program, when described as a “program that gives immigrants whose home countries are considered unsafe the ability to live and work in the United States temporarily.”
- A similarly strong majority (68% support/26% oppose) support Biden’s usage of TPS to “allow immigrants from war-torn countries to live and work in the United States while it’s unsafe to return to their home countries.”
- President Biden’s usage of TPS is supported by many key constituencies, including Hispanics (72% support/24% oppose) and Independent voters (63%/25%). It’s nearly universally supported by Democrats (90%/7%), while dividing the Republican electorate (47%/47%).

Action: Redesignate all nations that qualify for TPS including Ecuador, DRC, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela.

By taking decisive action that would provide thousands of Dreamers and long-settled immigrants in the U.S. access to legal pathways, President Biden could deliver on his original promise to Americans: ensuring that immigrant families can stay together and continue contributing to the nation they call home. In stark contrast to Donald Trump, the president can show the American people that instead of demonizing immigrants, separating families or threatening to round up and deport immigrants, he is committed to rebuilding our immigration system in line with America’s values and centered on the very families who have fueled our economic comeback.