

# Broken U.S. Immigration Policy – The Great Distraction Issue

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Immigration is shamelessly used by the GOP's presidential candidates as another red herring issue. Most seek to attract support from the white nationalist Trump-inspired base, and create fear by spewing misinformation. Many extreme right spokesmen espouse the Great Replacement Theory that posits that white people are being replaced by immigrants and people of color in a plot to destroy their political power and erase their culture and values. They additionally charge that undocumented immigrants bring crime and drugs, all claims that are unsubstantiated by data and repeated studies.

Governor DeSantis calls for unilaterally deploying the U.S. military into Mexico to stop migrants and their trafficking of drugs. He touts passage of the Florida Anti-Immigration Bill in 2023 which invalidates out-of-state driver licenses to undocumented immigrants, forces employers to identify hires illegally in the country, and requires hospitals to ask patients about their immigration status. He additionally boasts about his initiatives transporting newly arrived undocumented immigrants in Texas to cities led by Democratic Party leaders, at Florida taxpayers' expense.

Other candidates also promise to use military force on drug cartels, complete the border wall, and deport millions of illegal immigrants from the U.S. All these positions are impractical and don't address the realities of foreign relations, U.S. law requirements, the enormous cost of necessary resources and basic morality considerations.

Congress, due to repeated obstruction by conservative Republicans, has failed for decades to agree on how to address immigration challenges, leaving many policy questions up to the courts and executive branch. President Biden has reversed many of former President Trump's highly restrictive and inhumane policies, despite confronting an historic influx of undocumented immigrants.

## **Immigration Facts**

Immigrants constitute eighteen percent of the U.S. workforce of 164 million and historically have been a key factor to meet the employment demands of a healthy U.S. economy. Thirty-four million immigrants are here legally with another 11 million being undocumented.

Florida's population of twenty-two million, includes 4.5 million immigrants and approximately eight hundred thousand undocumented immigrants. Immigrants make up about 26% of its total workforce and account for 41% of workers in the state's agricultural industries, 34% in construction, and 30% in service industries.

Immigrant business owners account for 437,690 (33%) of all self-employed Florida residents and generate \$7.1 billion in business income.

### **Key Issues to Immigration Reform**

Despite the contentious political campaigns underway, continued proposals to reform immigration laws include the following key issues:

1. Securing the southern border – use of a physical wall or increasing other resources.
2. Catch and release policies – improving procedures and immigration court resources for processing migrants as they await adjudication of their asylum claims.
3. Pathways to citizenship, without amnesty, including for children born in the U.S.
4. Expanding visas for family-based reunions, temporary workers, and highly skilled workers
5. Increasing immigration enforcement and surveillance by employers
6. Reforming legal processes to make it easier to immigrate legally
7. Better coordinating economic and aid policies with countries driving refugees

It is imperative that moderate-minded citizens exert their influence and political forces to demand their legislators and the executive branch to establish new domestic and foreign policies to facilitate legal immigration and dissuade illegal migrants from entering our borders. Effective solutions will require a multi-faceted approach, including foreign economic and policy initiatives. This will ultimately reduce the salience of immigration as an electoral issue and can bring enhanced nationwide civil harmony regarding a population sector that has historically been a key for the success of our culture, social dynamics, entrepreneurship, economy, and moral fiber of our nation.