

Biden's New Immigration Policy Will Keep Most Immigrants Out of U.S.

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U.S. President Joe Biden, using his executive authority, has put in place a new immigration policy designed to stop most of those seeking to immigrate into the United States.

With the expiration of Title 42, a public health measure used by former president Donald Trump and then by Biden during the COVID pandemic to keep hundreds of thousands of migrants out of the country, Biden has now turned to a new policy that is equally onerous and may violate both U.S. and international asylum law. Many liberals, progressives, and immigrant communities will see this as Biden reneging on his promises and as violating fundamental national values.

Historically the United States takes in about one million legal immigrants each year who are given legal permanent resident status (green card) and about half a million enter yearly without documents. The total U.S. immigrant population is over 40 million, more immigrants than any other nation. They make up 13.7% of the population, while 10.5 million undocumented immigrants make up just 3.2%. Asylees, people fleeing persecution and violence who are admitted, amount to only 25,000 per year.

Democrats and progressives have tended to see immigration as contributing to the U.S. economy and enriching its culture, while Republicans today argue that American society is being overwhelmed by foreigners who threaten the culture. Many large corporations favor immigration because it provides more workers, many at lower wages. Under pressure from Republicans, Biden appears to be adopting anti-immigrant policies to win broader support from independent voters with an eye to the coming election in 2024, though his new rules also reflect the Democrats' long-term trend of harsher immigration and border policies.

The new law is complicated. Immigrants from a few nations—Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Afghanistan and Ukraine—will get what is called “humanitarian parole” of two years legal residence. That is limited to 30,000 people per month who have financial sponsorship. Other migrants, while remaining abroad, must use an app to get an appointment, with about 1,000 available per day, though hearings have a waiting time of months or even years.

To get asylum based on fear of persecution and violence, migrants must first have applied for and been denied asylum in other countries through which they have passed. Some people will cross the border in an unauthorized place and turn themselves into authorities in order to seek asylum. Those with children will be released into the United States and given hearing dates, though they will have to wait for months or years for a hearing. Most adults traveling alone who claim asylum, a difficult standard to meet, will be quickly processed and deported and perhaps charged with a criminal violation. Based on earlier records, perhaps half of those who get asylum hearings will be accepted, the rest deported.

Why do so many migrants seek to enter the United States? The history of U.S. imperialism could be

called the principal driving force. The United States has dominated Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America over a hundred years, and South America for seventy. U.S economic exploitation, wars and military occupations, and support for military coups took the wealth from Latin America while destroying democracy, leading to authoritarianism. Then came the drug cartels with their extreme violence. At present, 25% of migrants come from Mexico, 15% from Central America, while a smaller percentage from the Philippines, a former U.S. colony. Today, Asians—most from India and China—represent the largest number of migrants, driven by global inequalities. Now the climate crisis also leads to migration.

U.S. imperialism, economic and military, led to a flood of migrants, and U.S. migration and border policies are meant to be a damn to stop them. But the crisis will continue as long as imperialism, militarism, and environmental crises continue.

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