



Trump goes all in on immigration

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September 1, 2016 12:00 pm | *AEIdeas*

In a [speech yesterday in Arizona](http://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-immigration-address-transcript-227614#ixzz4ly9i8FgK) (<http://www.politico.com/story/2016/08/donald-trump-immigration-address-transcript-227614#ixzz4ly9i8FgK>), following a one-on-one meeting with Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump outlined in detail his immigration plan. If anyone doubted Trump's commitment to taking an aggressive approach on immigration, those doubts should be put to rest.



(http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/RTX2NQUK_trump_mexico-e1472745119951.jpg)

Donald Trump in Mexico City, Mexico, August 31, 2016.
REUTERS/Henry Romero.

The ten-point plan will appeal to many Americans across the political spectrum and likely have more appeal to immigrants recently awarded citizenship, as they tend to get hit hardest by the availability of illegal labor. The ten-point plan includes the following elements:

- Build a physical wall along the southern border;
- End the catch-and-release program;
- Institute zero tolerance for criminal aliens;
- Block funding for sanctuary cities;
- Cancel unconstitutional Executive Orders and enforce all immigration laws;
- Suspend the issuance of visas to countries where adequate screening can't occur;
- Ensure that other countries take their people back when we order them deported (i.e., negotiate readmission accords);
- Complete the biometric entry-exit visa tracking system;
- Turn off the jobs and benefits magnet available to illegal immigrants; and

- Reform legal immigration to serve the best interests of America and its workers.

I proposed many of these ideas in [my policy work](http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/>) and my book, [Homeland Security and Federalism: Protecting America from Outside the Beltway](https://www.amazon.com/Homeland-Security-Federalism-Protecting-America/dp/1533374260/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8) (https://www.amazon.com/Homeland-Security-Federalism-Protecting-America/dp/1533374260/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8), so it is refreshing to see a top candidate embrace such common sense reforms.

In a criticism at politicians on both sides of the aisle, Trump stated, “When politicians talk about immigration reform, they usually mean the following: amnesty, open borders, and lower wages. Immigration reform should mean something else entirely: it should mean improvements to our laws and policies to make life better for American citizens.” He restated his belief made in Mexico that “it is our right as a sovereign nation to choose immigrants that we think are the likeliest to thrive and flourish here.”

Learn more: [Getting immigration reform right](http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/>)

More pointedly, Trump took aim at Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton by stating that she “talks constantly about her fears that families will be separated. But she’s not talking about the American families who have been permanently separated from their loved ones because of a preventable death. No, she’s only talking about families who came here in violation of the law.” Trump surrounded this harsh criticism by naming several Americans killed by illegal immigrants who had been released by the federal government or who returned to the US after being deported. It echoed his earlier knock on President Barack Obama after the Orlando terrorist attack in which he remarked that [Obama seemed angrier at Trump](http://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/trump-obama-orlando-shooting-224351) (<http://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/trump-obama-orlando-shooting-224351>) than at the terrorists who attack us. Some might find these types of attacks unfair, but many Americans find the concern for non-Americans bewildering.

Beyond the ten-point plan above, Trump provided a few other important details. First, he committed “to triple the number of ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) deportation officers...hire 5,000 more Border Patrol agents.” Trump plans to add a Deportation Task Force in ICE “focused on identifying and removing quickly the most dangerous criminal illegal immigrants in America who have evaded justice.” With the additional Border Patrol officers, Trump aims to get them on the border and “expand the number of Border Patrol Stations.” Again, these details will appeal to many Americans, especially those living in border states.

Next, in a strong appeal to the principal of federalism, Trump pledged to work “closely with local jurisdictions to remove criminal aliens.” All too often, the [federal government has failed](http://freebeacon.com/national-security/dhs-kept-secret-the-release-of-violent-criminal-illegal-immigrants/) (<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/dhs-kept-secret-the-release-of-violent-criminal-illegal-immigrants/>) to [meet its obligation to accept, detain, and deport](http://valleycentral.com/news/local/federal-deportation-policy-depends-on-sheriffs-local-jails-to-detain-criminal-immigrants) (<http://valleycentral.com/news/local/federal-deportation-policy-depends-on-sheriffs-local-jails-to-detain-criminal-immigrants>) illegal immigrants arrested by local law enforcement. In many cases, the federal government tells local law enforcement to just release the individuals. Critically, part of Trump’s federalism message included restoring “the highly successful Secure Communities program [and] expand[ing] and revitaliz[ing] the popular 287(g) partnerships, which will help to identify hundreds of thousands of deportable aliens in local jails.” As Trump observed, “Both of these programs have been recklessly gutted by this Administration.”

All too often, the federal government has failed to meet its obligation to accept, detain, and deport illegal immigrants arrested by local law enforcement.

Finally, Trump added a wrinkle I’ve never heard anyone articulate before when it comes to federal immigration laws. He argued that “we should sunset our visa laws so that Congress is forced to periodically revise and revisit them. We wouldn’t put our entire federal budget on autopilot for decades, so why should we do the same for immigration?” Many states have sunset laws for the exact purpose of ensuring that a law added in the past still has relevance and a positive impact today.

The one issue Trump avoided, which is probably smart due to the controversial nature of it, is the issue

of birthright citizenship in which someone born in America automatically becomes a citizen even if their parents are not citizens. There is widespread disagreement on whether birthright citizenship is constitutionally required. As a result, I [proposed that a “grand bargain”](http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/>) be struck in which a constitutional amendment is passed affirmatively eliminating birthright citizenship, in exchange for granting amnesty one final time to those in the US who don't find a legal means to be in the US once all other reforms are in place.

Trump's detailed plan should now put pressure on Clinton to articulate how her administration would handle immigration. All indications so far are that she would continue Obama's [executive amnesty](http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/23/politics/immigration-supreme-court/) (<http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/23/politics/immigration-supreme-court/>) policies, and [push to expand them](http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/287690-clinton-doubles-down-on-obamas-immigration-executive-actions) (<http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/287690-clinton-doubles-down-on-obamas-immigration-executive-actions>), shielding millions of illegal immigrants from deportation. By giving us details, Trump sets the stage for a robust debate with Clinton on how best to fix America's broken immigration system going forward.

Learn more: [Criticism of Homeland Security social media plan misses the real problem](http://www.aei.org/publication/criticism-of-homeland-security-social-media-plan-misses-real-problem/) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/criticism-of-homeland-security-social-media-plan-misses-real-problem/>) | [Getting immigration reform right](http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/getting-immigration-reform-right/>) | [America gets pushed around on immigration](http://www.aei.org/publication/america-gets-pushed-around-on-immigration/) (<http://www.aei.org/publication/america-gets-pushed-around-on-immigration/>)

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