

Even Conservatives Agree: Donald Trump's Immigration Plan is Bad for the Economy, Law Enforcement, and the Soul of the Country



Sarah Trumble
Former Deputy Director,
Social Policy & Politics



**Lanae Erickson
Hatalsky**
Vice President for the
Social Policy & Politics
Program
[@LanaeErickson](https://twitter.com/LanaeErickson)

Donald Trump has released a six-page immigration plan that promises to build a wall across the southern border, increase immigration enforcement and detention, and “put American workers first.”¹ He has also said that he will deport all of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States within two years and ban Muslims from entering the United States. We analyzed his plan using mostly conservative, business, and overtly non-partisan, non-interest group sources. Based on that, here’s what that plan would mean for the U.S. economy, law enforcement efforts, and the values of America.

1. What it Would Do to Our Economy

Our economy is stronger because of the immigrants who leave their countries behind to work in and for America. Using conservative, business-oriented, or overtly non-partisan sources, we found a consensus that if Trump’s immigration

plan were implemented, the economy would take a massive hit:

- If the 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States were deported, we'd lose between 5.1% and 6.4% of the total labor force—and “many of these positions will go unfilled because, by the time the Trump administration is under way, the U.S. is expected to be at full employment, meaning there will be no slack labor out of which to hire workers.” The agriculture, construction, retail, and restaurant industries would be especially devastated. ² –*American Action Forum, a center-right policy organization, and Mark Zandi, leading private sector economist at Moody's Analytics*
- Instead of lowering American unemployment, Trump's plan would do the opposite: “Mr. Trump's immigration policies will thus result in fewer jobs, potentially severe labor shortages, and higher labor costs. This will ultimately cause businesses to more aggressively raise prices for their products.” ³ –*Mark Zandi, leading private sector economist at Moody's Analytics*
- Rising unemployment and costs would lead to high inflation, increase interest rates, and help launch us into a recession within a year. ⁴ –*Mark Zandi, leading private sector economist at Moody's Analytics*
- Because undocumented immigrants are low-frequency users and high-frequency contributors to social services (due to the fact that they are ineligible to receive most of them), “the deficit would increase by about \$800 billion over 20 years” if they were deported *en masse*. ⁵ –*The Bipartisan Policy Center*
- Over the next two decades, implementing Trump's immigration policy would cause the GDP to decline by 5.7% or \$1.6 trillion—“similar to the GDP fall during the so called ‘great recession.’” ⁶ –*A New Day for America, Republican Political Action Committee supporting Ohio Gov. and former GOP presidential candidate John Kasich*

2. What it Would Do to Law Enforcement

For the law enforcement agencies tasked with immigration enforcement, Trump's proposed plan would be extraordinarily difficult and costly to carry out, with estimates of the practical cost over the next 20 years ranging from a minimum of \$166 billion (per a *POLITICO* analysis) to \$935 billion (according to John Kasich's A New Day for America PAC).⁷ Again, these findings are based only on data from conservative, business-friendly, or explicitly non-partisan organizations.

Deporting 11 million people is no easy task, and it would be an especially heavy—and costly—lift to complete in Trump's timeline:

- To carry out mass deportations, the government “would need to spend \$100 billion to \$300 billion arresting and removing all undocumented immigrants residing in the country. ...In addition, to prevent any new undocumented immigrants going forward, the government at a minimum would have to maintain current immigration enforcement levels. This results in an additional \$315 billion in continuing enforcement costs.”⁸ –*American Action Forum, a center-right policy organization*
- President Obama may be nicknamed the “Deporter-in-Chief” by his critics on the left, but in order to deport all 11 million undocumented immigrants under his proposed two-year timeline, Trump would have to deport more people every single month than the Obama Administration did in all of 2013.⁹ –*Forbes and Pew Research Center, a non-partisan research organization*

- If the federal government were to use only its own criminal investigators and fugitive operations teams to arrest all of the undocumented population (without relying on state or local law enforcement), the force of “federal apprehension personnel would have to be 104.6 times larger than it was in 2013.”¹⁰ –*American Action Forum, a center-right policy organization*
- Practically speaking, we’d need to increase the number of detention beds available tenfold (from 34,000 to 348,831), increase the number of immigration courts from 50 to 1,316, and hire 30,000 new federal attorneys. And the deportations themselves would require “a minimum of 17,296 chartered flights and 30,701 chartered bus trips each year.”¹¹ –*American Action Forum, a center-right policy organization*
- Experts agree there is no feasible way to actually identify and deport all 11 million undocumented people in the 18 months to two years promised by Trump—most estimate it would take somewhere between eight and 20 years to carry out such a plan.¹² –*American Action Forum, a center-right policy organization, and Mark Zandi, leading private sector economist at Moody’s Analytics*

Building a wall that spans the entire southern border would be prohibitively expensive—and despite what Trump suggests, Mexico is not going to pay for it:

- However, Trump didn't promise a fence—he promised an Israeli-style wall, and that would require tearing down the fence we have now and replacing it “with a total price tag of \$15 billion to \$25 billion” (not including the estimated \$750 million in maintenance such a wall would require every year).¹³ That's nearly the same amount (\$26.6 billion) allocated by *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* for more than 12,000 road, highway, and bridge projects in the wake of the Great Recession.¹⁴ –*POLITICO, CNBC, the Migration Policy Institute, a non-partisan think tank, and the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration*
- Regardless of what Trump promises, Mexico is not going to pay for this wall. And the methods Trump intends to use to force them to do so (like seizing money workers earn and send back to their families in Mexico and increasing fees for certain visas, at ports of entry, and on border crossing cards) would likely hurt both the Mexican and American economies and ultimately increase illegal immigration.¹⁵ –*The New York Times and A New Day for America, Republican Political Action Committee supporting Ohio Gov. and former GOP presidential candidate John Kasich*

Amping up enforcement and detention to the levels Trump proposes would require substantially more manpower, money, and resources than the federal government can provide:

- Trump proposes tripling the current number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers who work in detention and removal operations. “In fiscal 2014, the federal government spent about \$2.79 billion for detention and removal operations, so a force three times the current size would cost about \$8.4 billion per year.”¹⁶ –*POLITICO and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security*

- Detaining all immigrants apprehended at the border and all criminal aliens would cost a minimum of \$1.7 billion each year. Under Trump’s plan, the nearly 500,000 immigrants caught at the border each year would all have to be housed until deportation—at a cost of \$123.54 per person per day for an average of 29.4 days. # —POLITICO and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

3. What it Would Do to Our Nation’s Soul

America is a nation of immigrants, founded on the notion of freedom from religious persecution. By contrast, Donald Trump’s immigration policy is xenophobic, nativist, and un-American in every sense of the word.

Ending Birthright Citizenship

Trump calls for ending birthright citizenship, the constitutional guarantee that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States.”¹⁷ Removing this provision would require two-thirds of either both Houses of Congress or of states’ legislatures to propose such an amendment and then three-fourths of the states to ratify it. The last major attempt to ratify an amendment to the Constitution—to establish the Equal Rights Amendment—lasted a decade and still failed, falling three states short of the 38 required.¹⁸ Amending the Constitution is no easy task, even when it’s in furtherance of a just cause—which this is not.

Birthright citizenship is part of what makes America uniquely American. Many other countries rely on the concept of *jus sanguinis* (by right of blood) and ancestry—as President Ronald Reagan once said while paraphrasing a letter he’d received, “You can go to live in Germany or Turkey, and you won’t become a German or a Turk. But...anybody from any corner of the world can come to America to live and become an American.”¹⁹ As a matter of fact, to be a German citizen, a child born in Germany must be born to a German parent or to

a parent who has lived in Germany long enough to petition for citizenship him or herself. With few exceptions, a child born to non-citizens in France is only considered French if at least one of her parents was also born there. Greece further requires both that a parent was born in Greece and that he or she live there permanently. Policies like these leave generations of immigrants on the sidelines of society, even in the country where they were born and the only one in which they have ever lived.²⁰ In contrast, America has long held that anyone born on its shores is a citizen—regardless of who his parents are, what color her skin is, or how much wealth he or she will inherit. To use the Constitution to undo that would undermine the very spirit of the original document.

Establishing a “Deportation Force”

To carry out his mass deportations, Trump has called for the creation of a “deportation force” that would terrorize our streets and make people feel unsafe in their own homes.²¹ When asked about the fact that parents would be ripped away from their children in deportation raids, Trump promised to keep families together while deporting the undocumented—and the only way to do both would be to deport entire families, regardless of an individual family member’s immigration status.²² That would mean even American citizens who were born in this country or children who are here legally would be deported along with their undocumented parents. Finally, in order to meet Trump’s two-year timeline for deporting all 11 million undocumented immigrants, an estimated 100,000 American citizens would likely be swept up in raids, detained indefinitely, and even accidentally deported to nations to which they have no ties.²³

Banning Muslims from Immigrating to the United States

When the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620, they were fleeing religious persecution, and our forefathers built this country on the bedrock of free exercise of religion. American Muslims are part of what makes this nation great, and to deny people entry to this country or kick them out

because they are Muslim is not only wrong, but it violates U.S. law, the Constitution, and international law.²⁴

Today, it's estimated that 3.3 million Muslims live in the United States, and as of 2011, 81% of them were U.S. citizens.²⁵ Islam is the world's fastest-growing religion, and nearly a quarter of the world's population considers itself Muslim.²⁶ By 2050, Muslims are expected to make up 30% of the world's population—nearly matching Christianity's reach.²⁷ And according to Pew, 80,000–90,000 Muslims currently immigrate to the United States every year.²⁸

In the most recent iteration of his ban, Trump has suggested it would only apply to “countries with great terrorism.”²⁹ No one—likely including Trump himself—knows what that means or to whom that designation exactly would apply. One reading of Trump's plan suggests the ban would only apply to countries that are home to perpetrators of terrorism specifically against the United States and our European allies. Even under that narrowest reading, Trump's plan would require restricting immigration from the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia.³⁰

There is nothing remotely acceptable about a customs officer asking people if they are Muslim and turning them away if they say “yes.” It is our values that make us American, and Trump's immigration plan violates virtually all of them.

Conclusion

Donald Trump's immigration plan is bad for the economy, bad for law enforcement tasked with carrying our immigration laws, and degrading to the soul of this nation. That's not just what we believe, that's what the data shows—even when that data mostly comes from Trump's side of the aisle. We need to fix our immigration system, but we can't do so with a plan built on fudged facts, nativist rhetoric, and a lack of understanding of the economy, the capacity of federal law enforcement, and what it means to be American.

END NOTES

- 1.** “Immigration Reform that Will Make America Great Again,” Donald J. Trump for President. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at:
<https://www.donaldjtrump.com/positions/immigration-reform>.
- 2.** Ben Gitis and Laura Collins, “The Budgetary And Economic Costs Of Addressing Unauthorized Immigration: Alternative Strategies,” Research Report, American Action Forum, March 6, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at:
<https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/the-budgetary-and-economic-costs-of-addressing-unauthorized-immigration-alt/>; See also: Mark Zandi, “The Macroeconomic Consequences of Mr. Trump's Economic Policies,” Report, Moody's Analytics, June 20, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at:
<https://www.economy.com/dismal/analysis/free/283579>.
- 3.** Mark Zandi, “The Macroeconomic Consequences of Mr. Trump's Economic Policies,” Report, Moody's Analytics, June 20, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at:
<https://www.economy.com/dismal/analysis/free/283579>.
- 4.** Mark Zandi, “The Macroeconomic Consequences of Mr. Trump's Economic Policies,” Report, Moody's Analytics, June 20, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at:
<https://www.economy.com/dismal/analysis/free/283579>.

- 5.** “Immigration Reform: Implications for Growth, Budgets and Housing,” Immigration Task Force Report, Bipartisan Policy Center, October 29, 2013. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/immigration-reform-implications-growth-budgets-and-housing-824/>; See also: Ben Gitis and Laura Collins, “The Budgetary And Economic Costs Of Addressing Unauthorized Immigration: Alternative Strategies,” Research Report, American Action Forum, March 6, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/the-budgetary-and-economic-costs-of-addressing-unauthorized-immigration-alt/>.
- 6.** Mark McIntosh and Steven Bogden, “The \$900 Billion Question: How to Address Illegal Immigration in America— A Complete Fiscal Analysis Of Donald J. Trump’s Immigration Reform Plan,” A New Day for America, January 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.p2016.org/trump/newdayforamerica011115.pdf>.
- 7.** Seung Min Kim, “Trump's Immigration Tab: \$166 Billion,” *POLITICO*, August 19, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/08/donald-trumps-immigration-tab-166-billion-121500>.
- 8.** Ben Gitis, “The Personnel And Infrastructure Needed To Remove All Undocumented Immigrants In Two Years,” Research Report, American Action Forum, February 28, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/the-personnel-and-infrastructure-needed-to-remove-all-undocumented-immigrants-in-two-years/>.

- 9.** Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Jens Manuel Krogstad, “U.S. Deportations of Immigrants Reach Record High in 2013,” Pew Research Center, October 2, 2014. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/02/u-s-deportations-of-immigrants-reach-record-high-in-2013/>; See also: Dolia Estevez, “Trump's Deportation Plan 'Prohibitively Expensive' ,” *Forbes*, September 14, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/doliaestevez/2015/09/14/trumps-plan-to-round-up-and-deport-11-million-immigrants-within-24-months-prohibitively-expensive/#17b3cae72b1e>.
- 10.** Ben Gitis, “The Personnel And Infrastructure Needed To Remove All Undocumented Immigrants In Two Years,” Research Report, American Action Forum, February 28, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/the-personnel-and-infrastructure-needed-to-remove-all-undocumented-immigrants-in-two-years/>.
- 11.** Ben Gitis, “The Personnel And Infrastructure Needed To Remove All Undocumented Immigrants In Two Years,” Research Report, American Action Forum, February 28, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/the-personnel-and-infrastructure-needed-to-remove-all-undocumented-immigrants-in-two-years/>.
- 12.** Ben Gitis and Laura Collins, “The Budgetary And Economic Costs Of Addressing Unauthorized Immigration: Alternative Strategies,” Research Report, American Action Forum, March 6, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.americanactionforum.org/research/the-budgetary-and-economic-costs-of-addressing-unauthorized-immigration-alt/>; See also: Mark Zandi, “The Macroeconomic Consequences of Mr. Trump's Economic Policies,” Report, Moody's Analytics, June 20, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.economy.com/dismal/analysis/free/283579>.

- 13.** Seung Min Kim, "Trump's Immigration Tab: \$166 Billion," *POLITICO*, August 19, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/08/donald-trumps-immigration-tab-166-billion-121500>; See also: Kate Drew, "This is What Trump's Border Wall Could Cost US," *CNBC*, October 9, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/09/this-is-what-trumps-border-wall-could-cost-us.html>.
- 14.** United States, Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/>.
- 15.** Julia Preston, "Donald Trump's Claims on Immigration: A Reality Check," *The New York Times*, August 17, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/politics/first-draft/2015/08/17/donald-trumps-immigration-plan-would-have-far-ranging-effects/?_r=0; See also: Mark McIntosh and Steven Bogden, "The \$900 Billion Question: How to Address Illegal Immigration in America—A Complete Fiscal Analysis Of Donald J. Trump's Immigration Reform Plan," *A New Day for America*, January 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.p2016.org/trump/newdayforamerica011115.pdf>.
- 16.** Seung Min Kim, "Trump's Immigration Tab: \$166 Billion," *POLITICO*, August 19, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/08/donald-trumps-immigration-tab-166-billion-121500>.
- 17.** Constitution of the United States, Amendment XIV, Section 1. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv>.
- 18.** "The Equal Right Amendment," The Alice Paul Institute. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/>.

- 19.** Eyder Peralta, "3 Things You Should Know About Birthright Citizenship," National Public Radio, August 18, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/08/18/432707866/3-things-you-should-know-about-birthright-citizenship>; See also: Ronald Reagan, "Quotation #35947," The Quotation Pages, November 7, 1988. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/35947.html>.
- 20.** "Citizenship Based on Birth in Country," The United States Law Library of Congress, Global Legal Research Center," May 2012. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/citizenship-birth-country/citizenship-birth-country.pdf>.
- 21.** Tom LoBianco, "Donald Trump Promises 'Deportation Force' to Remove 11 Million," CNN, November 12, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/11/politics/donald-trump-deportation-force-debate-immigration/>.
- 22.** Elise Foley, "Trump Would Deport Parents Of U.S. Citizens But Keep Families Together," *The Huffington Post*, August 16, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-immigration-plan_us_55d0b5cde4b07adddb433ecd.
- 23.** Michael R. Strain, "Donald Trump's Immigration Plan Would Cause U.S. Citizens to be Deported," *The Washington Post*, November 12, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/11/12/donald-trumps-immigration-plan-would-cause-u-s-citizens-to-be-deported/>.
- 24.** Jerry Markon, "Experts: Trump's Muslim Entry Ban Idea 'Ridiculous,' 'Unconstitutional'," *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/experts-trumps-muslim-entry-ban-idea-ridiculous-unconstitutional/2015/12/07/d44a970a-9d47-11e5-bce4-708fe33e3288_story.html.

- 25.** Besheer Mohamed, "A New Estimate of the U.S. Muslim Population," Pew Research Center, January 6, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/06/a-new-estimate-of-the-u-s-muslim-population/>; See also: "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism," Report, Pew Research Center, August 30, 2011. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/muslim-americans-no-signs-of-growth-in-alienation-or-support-for-extremism/>.
- 26.** Michael Lipka and Conrad Hackett, "Why Muslims are the World's Fastest-Growing Religious Group," Pew Research Center, April 23, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/23/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/>.
- 27.** Michael Lipka and Conrad Hackett, "Why Muslims are the World's Fastest-Growing Religious Group," Pew Research Center, April 23, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/23/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/>.
- 28.** Jenna Johnson and David Weigel, "Donald Trump Calls for 'Total' Ban on Muslims Entering United States," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 2015. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2015/12/07/e56266f6-9d2b-11e5-8728-1af6af208198_story.html.
- 29.** Beth Reinhard and Damian Paletta, "Donald Trump Back-Pedals on Banning Muslims From U.S.," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-back-pedals-on-banning-muslims-from-u-s-1467058774>.
- 30.** Beth Reinhard and Damian Paletta, "Donald Trump Back-Pedals on Banning Muslims From U.S.," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2016. Accessed July 8, 2016. Available at: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/donald-trump-back-pedals-on-banning-muslims-from-u-s-1467058774>.

