

**To:** Interested Parties

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**Re: Voters Want Both Border Security and Expanded Legal Immigration**

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In April of 2026, the Center for American Progress and Blue Rose Research fielded a national survey investigating how voters feel about immigration, border security, and the Trump administration's immigration enforcement tactics, alongside a range of policies designed to address them.

The results are clear: **voters want both increased border security to crack down on illegal immigration *and* expanded legal immigration.** A policy package that combines both of these priorities is more popular than one that pushes in just one direction.

The most popular policies tested are practical, combined reforms—including those laid out in the [CAP immigration plan](#):

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| <i>Border Security</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Adding personnel</b>, building new infrastructure and surveillance technology to stop unauthorized crossings, and modernizing ports of entry.</li><li>2. <b>Reforming the asylum system</b> with fast adjudication at the border, a fair screening, and an end to catch-and-release.</li></ol> |
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| <i>Legal Immigration</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. <b>Modernizing the outdated legal immigration system</b> to expand pathways for workers, entrepreneurs, and families and clearing existing visa backlogs.</li></ol> |
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| <i>Path to Citizenship</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. <b>Creating an earned pathway to citizenship</b> for long-term undocumented immigrants who pass background checks, pay back taxes, and meet other conditions.</li></ol> |
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**1. Voters still believe border security is an urgent problem—they want both tough border enforcement *and* expanded legal immigration.**

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Concern about border security and illegal immigration is broad and cuts across partisan lines. Sixty-four percent of voters are at least somewhat concerned about border security, including a majority of Harris voters. **By a 2-to-1 margin (61% to 33%), voters agree that illegal immigration is a big problem facing the country.**

**By a similar margin (57% to 32%), voters believe that expanded legal immigration is part of the answer.** This includes a majority of swing voters—and notably 45% of Trump voters—who believe that more people should be allowed to immigrate legally to the United States.

## 2. A comprehensive policy package outperforms standalone enforcement.

The highest-performing proposals were those that combined tougher border enforcement with expanded legal pathways and process reforms. **Strengthened border security** drew 61% support; an **earned pathway to citizenship** for people who have lived here at least ten years, paid back taxes, and passed background checks drew 60% support; an **asylum reform policy** requiring 30-day adjudication at the border, with applicants not released into the country and only those facing true persecution approved, drew 58% support.

Policy		Topline Support
<b>Border Security</b>	<b>Build physical barriers, deploy surveillance technology, add personnel, and modernize ports of entry to stop unlawful crossings and contraband.</b>	<b>61%</b>
<b>Path to Citizenship</b>	<b>Allow undocumented immigrants who have lived here at least 10 years, have no serious criminal record, pass background checks, and pay back taxes plus a fine to earn citizenship.</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Asylum Reform</b>	<b>Decide all asylum cases at the border within 30 days, with applicants not released into the country and those who do not qualify immediately returned home.</b>	<b>58%</b>
Legal Immigration	Expand legal pathways for workers, entrepreneurs, and family members, clear visa backlogs, and strengthen protections for American workers.	54%
ICE Reforms	Require ICE to prioritize public safety and national security threats and prohibit warrantless home searches and the use of masks during enforcement.	54%
Humane Border Detention	Build humane detention facilities with freedom of movement and legal services, where applicants go through expedited 30-day asylum screening without release into the country.	53%
Higher Asylum Standards	Presume asylum seekers from functioning democracies ineligible and raise the bar for all applicants.	53%
<b>Maximum Enforcement</b>	Deport all undocumented immigrants with no exceptions, no path to remain legally, and limited ability to appeal.	<b>48%</b>
<b>Birthright Citizenship</b>	End automatic citizenship for children born in the U.S. to parents who are not legal residents or citizens.	<b>47%</b>
<b>ICE and DHS</b>	Invest tens of billions in ICE and DHS to expand deportation operations and remove all undocumented immigrants currently in the country.	<b>46%</b>

By contrast, the Trump administration approach that has dominated the national debate performs poorly. A proposal to deport all undocumented immigrants with no exceptions registered 48% support, ending birthright citizenship drew 46% support, and a massive increase in ICE and DHS funding to fuel mass deportation drew 46%. **These maximalist enforcement positions are not simply less popular than a comprehensive reform package; they are among the worst-performing policies tested by Blue Rose across all issue areas (worse than 85% of all policies tested).** Every policy in CAP’s reform package outperforms every one of Trump’s signature immigration enforcement policies.

**3. Alongside border security, an earned path to citizenship is one of the most popular immigration policies tested.**

Voters strongly support a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who have been here a long time. The **10-year threshold** included in CAP’s plan—with requirements that applicants have no serious criminal record, are economically self-sufficient, pass background checks, and pay any back taxes owed plus a fine—has 68% support. It enjoys majority support from Harris voters (80%), swing voters (64%), and Trump voters (57%), as well as majorities of every major demographic group measured. Proposals for 20- and 30-year thresholds receive only marginally higher support.

<b>Years lived in the U.S.</b>	<b>Approve</b>	<b>Net approval</b>
At least 1 year	48%	+9 points
At least 3 years	58%	+28 points
At least 5 years	62%	+33 points
<b>At least 10 years</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>+46 points</b>
At least 20 years	72%	+54 points
At least 30 years	71%	+51 points

When voters are forced to rank what government should prioritize on immigration, providing a pathway to citizenship for law-abiding immigrants who pay taxes ranks second overall (63%), trailing only deporting immigrants who have committed violent crimes (64%). The political worry that a generous path to citizenship is a political vulnerability does not hold up under polling. It is among the most popular things that can be offered on immigration.

**4. Asylum reform is not currently top-of-mind for voters, but CAP’s framework is the most inclusive approach that they will reliably back.**

Asylum reform is a critical component of any comprehensive immigration plan, but it is not a current top priority for voters. When voters were asked to rank what is most important on

immigration, reforming asylum ranked eighth out of 11 priorities tested—well below a pathway to citizenship, and securing the border.

**Voters are inclined to take a hardline approach to asylum**, and are roughly split on a more progressive "reform and protect asylum" position and a hardline "asylum ban" position (43% to 44% overall, 38% to 40% among swing voters). At the same time, when given specific asylum reform options, voters give CAP's asylum proposals strong support:

- **30-day adjudication and an end to *catch-and-release*** – 58% support.
- **Raising the standards for asylum seekers**, including a presumption of ineligibility for applicants from functioning democracies – 53% support.
- **Humane border processing facilities** with expedited screening – 53% support.

Overall, we know that voters consistently prefer an immigration policy that pairs enforcement with expanded legal opportunity. But voters are closely split on asylum and lean slightly toward the hardline framing, so there is a very narrow political lane for an inclusive asylum policy. CAP's asylum framework is likely the most inclusive approach voters will reliably back since it preserves asylum without compromising on border security.

## **5. Leading with border security strengthens support for legal immigration.**

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Polling confirms that **including a border security message helps strengthen arguments for expanded legal immigration**. When we include efforts to secure the border, the CAP pro-immigration and border security plan outperforms the maximum enforcement alternative by 12 points. Expanded legal immigration is already popular, but gains even more support when paired with border security and asylum reform messages.

## **Conclusion**

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Voters are sending a consistent, coherent signal: **they want an immigration plan that takes both border security and legal immigration seriously**. They want illegal immigration brought under control, expanded pathways for legal immigration, and an earned path to citizenship for those who have lived here a long time. They do not want mass deportation, the end of birthright citizenship, or vast new investments in punitive enforcement.

CAP's plan—combining robust border security, asylum reform, modernization of the outdated legal immigration statute last updated in 1990, and an earned path to citizenship—aligns with most voters. For those on the left who may be uncomfortable with a firmer line on fixing asylum, this is the most inclusive position voters will reliably support. For those on the right who may be uncomfortable with a generous pathway to citizenship, these are among the most popular policies any immigration plan can offer. Taken together, these findings suggest that a balanced immigration plan can find significant support with voters across the political spectrum.