In Two Reports, MPI Sketches Immigration Policy Areas That Merit Review & Changes That Have Occurred Under Trump Administration

WASHINGTON – As the United States witnesses one of the most dynamic policy periods in the immigration arena, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) today released a pair of reports that examine actions taken during the first two years of the Trump administration as well as a number of less visible issues that merit fuller review.

In *[Eight Key U.S. Immigration Policy Issues: State of Play and Unanswered Questions](#)*, authors Doris Meissner and Julia Gelatt examine a range of policy areas that have not been at the forefront of debate but deserve greater information sharing with the public and policymakers.

Among the questions they ask:

- What achievable definition of border security should the federal government be measured on? And what border spending is likely to generate the highest returns on investment, in particular in an era where migration patterns have changed significantly and the U.S. government is spending one-third more on immigration enforcement than on the combined budgets of the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Secret Service, U.S. Marshal's Service and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives?
- With the H-1B visa program the main vehicle through which U.S. employers can sponsor skilled foreign workers for admission, what program reforms would address concerns about the replacement of U.S. workers while still meeting employer needs, considering the largest H-1B employers deemed dependent on these workers pay them less and employ fewer with advanced degrees than less H-1B dependent peers?
- With 1.6 million unauthorized immigrants eligible for green cards as the spouses or minor children of U.S. citizens or green-card holders, is it time for Congress to revisit the three- and 10-year bars on re-entry that are blocking most unauthorized immigrants who could be sponsored by a relative or employer from applying for fear of triggering lengthy absences from the United States?

Other topics covered include reductions in the refugee resettlement program, increased U.S. custody of unaccompanied minors in emergency shelters, expanded use of the attorney general's ability to change immigration legal precedents and labor market challenges in the agriculture sector.

The Trump administration's marked activity on the immigration front contrasts sharply with Congress, which has been largely unable to tackle substantive change to the immigration system over nearly two decades. "This period of significant action by the executive branch, which has surfaced a real questioning of long-held immigration policies and practices, presents a new opportunity for lawmakers to inject policy ideas of their own into what have been prolonged, often stagnant, legislative debates," Meissner and Gelatt write.

The second report, *Immigration-Related Policy Changes in the First Two Years of the Trump Administration*, lists the major immigration actions taken since January 2017, categorized by major issue area. The report, authored by Sarah Pierce, covers, among other things, immigration enforcement at the U.S. border and in the interior; Justice Department changes that affect the immigration courts; humanitarian programs and statuses; shifts in how the State Department adjudicates visa applications and admits foreign nationals to the country; and adjustments to a variety of immigrant and non-immigrant visa categories.

"This report represents a really useful resource for anyone interested in the actions taken across the immigration spectrum over the past two years, briefly summarizing the most important aspects," Meissner said.

Read the *Eight Key U.S. Immigration Policy Issues* report here: www.migrationpolicy.org/research/eight-key-us-immigration-policy-issues.

Read the report outlining the Trump administration immigration changes here: www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigration-policy-changes-two-years-trump-administration.