

# Immigration

January 10, 2020

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America is a story of migration and promise. Unless an individual is native to this land or had their ancestors forcibly brought here in slavery, there was a moment in each American's family history when an ordinary individual made the serious, hopeful, and courageous decision to come to America.

For more than 400 years, immigrants have continually taken a leap of faith to build a better life for themselves and their families on our shores. Our nation has offered itself to people fleeing persecution, seeking educational excellence, and pursuing economic opportunities. Our best values — hard work, family, openness, unity, and freedom — are defined and exemplified by those who energetically contribute to our Great Experiment and choose to help build this wonderful country.

But, our immigration system no longer reflects our best values. From the Muslim travel ban to the repeal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), from escalating Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids to the proliferation of squalid camps at the southern border, the Trump Administration is committing unconscionable acts by systematically attacking immigrant communities of color. They have wrenched babies from their mothers' arms and left children to [die in cages from the common flu](#).

Yet even before Trump took office, elected officials in Washington D.C. failed to pass immigration reform. At the same time, U.S. policies — on climate change, the failed war on drugs, and foreign affairs — played a role in increasing global migration. For years, undocumented communities have lived in the long shadow of surprise raids and forced deportations while documented immigrants have navigated a slow, uncertain, and archaic bureaucracy.

As president, Tom Steyer will reform our immigration system in a comprehensive and humane fashion. He knows that we must heal, as a nation, from the past actions of an unjust and often violent approach to immigration and that relief is needed immediately for families across our nation. Tom will always embody the ideals of the office and strive to unite the country across racial, ethnic and political lines. Tom will fight for a pathway to citizenship for the [10.5-12 million](#) undocumented Americans who are part of our society today and integral to our country's economic engine. He will overhaul enforcement agencies and update asylum policies to reflect the best of our humanity. He is committed to making the immigration process easier to navigate.

Most importantly, Tom is committed to making the immigration system the work of a government that functions as the standard-bearer of the values America holds. To his core, Tom knows that *'Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free'* is a promise he intends to keep.

**Starting on Day One of his administration, Tom will:**

- Protect vulnerable immigrant communities and end the abuses within the immigration system
- Reform our legal immigration system to reflect our best values
- Reinvigorate the asylum and refugee system
- Build partnerships to foster integration and civic engagement

**Tom will act immediately to protect vulnerable immigrant communities and put an end to abuses within the immigration system.**

Immigrant communities in the U.S. have been under attack. To end this era of fear and distrust, we must heal the relationship between the immigration system and our communities. We have seen atrocities committed on the border by our government, in our name. The Trump Administration has, in particular, castigated non-white immigrants. On Day One, Tom will use executive authority to restore commonsense and humanity to our immigration system. To do this, he will:

- **Use executive action to reinstate DACA, enact DAPA, revitalize TPS, and end the Muslim travel ban.** Tom will move immediately on Day One to reinstate and extend Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), including Advance Parole for DACA recipients, and enact Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), ensuring that the millions who rely on those programs will be able to live their lives openly in our workplaces, classrooms, and communities. Tom will end the racist Muslim ban. He will redesignate nations under a revitalized Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program to ensure those from nations fleeing war or natural disaster can rebuild their lives without fear. He will also work toward a pathway to permanent residency for those within these programs.
- **Work with Congress to create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented Americans.** There are [10.5-12 million](#) undocumented immigrants who call America home. They are our neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family. They were children adopted into American families and are the parents of U.S. citizens. They are long-standing pillars of their communities, and their labor and creativity are foundational to our economic success. Yet despite this, politicians in Washington, D.C. have failed to do right for them or for our nation by recognizing their

contributions and presence. This is unconscionable. As President, Tom will work closely with Congress to establish a fair, equitable, and expedited pathway to citizenship.

- **Reform ICE, CBP, and USCIS to reflect our values and culture.** The Trump Administration has given Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) free reign to pursue their worst impulses. Through an inclusive, community-led process, a Steyer Administration will reform these agencies to reflect our best values and refocus their actions on their core mission of national security and fairly processing immigration claims. Tom will mandate strong accountability and independent oversight so their misuse of power can never be repeated. He will have a zero tolerance policy for hateful acts by those wearing the uniform of the U.S. government and will pursue justice through legal action against those responsible for human rights violations under the Trump Administration.
- **End family separation and cruel detention policies.** On our southern border, we are witnessing [cruel acts](#) perpetrated by our own government. A Steyer Administration will end family separation and incarceration, immediately respect the Flores Agreement that sets strict restrictions on the detention of minors, end the shackling of pregnant women, and work to ensure a fair and speedy process for immigrants and refugees arriving at the border. Tom knows that there should be no profit motive in the incarceration or deportation of any person and will abolish private prisons and detention centers.
- **Reform interior enforcement so that communities can live without fear.** A Steyer Administration will decriminalize border crossings and will process those who cross without inspection under civil, not criminal, law. In addition, Steyer's Administration will only use forcible deportation as a tool of last resort, as with those convicted of violent felony crimes. Programs that deputize and militarize local police to aid in immigration enforcement harm community relationships and put immigrant communities and families at risk. Tom will end ICE detainers, 287(g), and Secure Communities programs, including all local prison contracts with ICE, so that local law enforcement can focus on community safety. A Steyer Administration will place limits upon interior enforcement, including ensuring that enforcement does not target sensitive locations such as churches, schools, courthouses, and hospitals, so that no one fears to access vital community services. Tom will stop worksite raids, including a stop to ICE interference in labor disputes.
- **Support immigrants who have served in America's Armed Forces.** Many immigrants have served our nation valiantly in the armed services or as translators for our troops, yet our immigration system has failed them. Tom supports the Veterans Visa and Protection Act and the Veterans Deportation Prevention and Reform Act, will expedite the return of eligible deported veterans to the U.S., and will work to support expedited pathways to citizenship for those who don the uniform of our Armed Forces.

## **Tom will reform and restructure our legal immigration system to reflect our best values and strengthen our economy.**

Without a fair and humane immigration system, our nation cannot flourish. We need an immigration system that is lawful, but also efficient. For immigrants from all backgrounds, we need clearer rules, ample counsel, support services, and shorter waits. To ensure our system reflects the best of America, Tom will:

- **Appropriately resource federal agencies that provide administrative immigration services.** For too long, critical administrative resources have been drained at U.S. Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS), leading to a stifling bureaucratic backlog of visa, asylum, and permanent residency applications. USCIS needs staff and financial resources to more quickly process those seeking legal entrance, such as asylum, to the United States. At the same time, [financial resources](#) for enforcement and detention have ballooned. Tom will right-size the enforcement budget. To lead this effort, he will appoint justice-oriented and fair-minded leaders to direct the immigration agencies, grow the administrative capacity required for due process, and rebuild Americans' trust in their government.
- **Reform the immigration courts.** While Trump has been tearing families apart, Tom Steyer [partnered](#) with community organizations and university clinics to defend immigrant rights and keep families together. He donated \$3.3 million to fund legal aid for immigrants and refugees facing deportation. To date, that network of organizations has secured the help of more than 7,000 volunteer lawyers, mental health professionals, and organizers to fight for justice on behalf of these families. Through this work, Tom knows legal counsel, social worker assistance, and access to mental health services is invaluable for immigrants facing a proceeding. He will guarantee the right to legal counsel in immigration proceedings to ensure due process for all. He will also move to institute an independent immigration court system under the legislative branch.
- **Preserve and prioritize family-based immigration as a core value in our immigration system.** The family, as a basis of immigration, is something unique to the United States and strengthens America. The Steyer Administration would defend and protect our family-based immigration system in any future immigration reform. Tom knows that families belong together. His administration will also work to cut the visa backlog for immigrant families waiting to reunite, some of which have been waiting decades for the opportunity to join their families.
- **Increase transparency and fairness in the visa adjudication process.** When applying for a change in status, there is too much uncertainty in the timeline and required supporting materials. Tom will work to clarify and expedite the process at each step. He will end the public charge rule in the consideration of immigration status review. The Trump Administration has used their proposed changes to this policy to frighten immigrants and their families, [detering families](#) from seeking needed medical care, education, and other critical human services while in the midst of a pending immigration status review.

- **Work with universities, research labs and the private sector to recruit and retain talented thinkers and builders from around the world.** Immigrants have long come to America to pursue an education, start a company, and innovate. We must work in partnership across sectors to continue to be a magnet for those seeking to learn, innovate, and build. Advanced degree recipients from American Universities who wish to call America home should be given every chance to do so upon graduation. Tom supports reinvigorating our visa system — including streamlining the H1B visa application process, increasing the number of H1 visas available to no less than Obama-era levels, and facilitating pathways to permanent residency — to attract and retain talented individuals from around the world. Tom will support the right of H1B spouses to find work and protect the H4 visa classification.
- **Protect Farmworkers.** Tom supports the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which will provide a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented agricultural workers who help feed America alongside reasonable reforms to the H-2A visa program that protect workers.
- **Refocus border enforcement on national security.** The United States is our country, and we have a right to safe and secure borders. A Steyer Administration will ensure the continuation of critical border security operations. But “Build the Wall” is not the answer. Tom will upgrade ports of entry, smartly screen containers and freight, and stop traffickers from moving drugs, guns and people they seek to extort and abuse. A Steyer Administration will ensure strong accountability and transparency at CBP.

### **Tom will reimagine the asylum and refugee system while addressing increased global migration spurred by the climate crisis.**

The United States must recommit itself as a humane refuge for those seeking freedom and safety. Our asylum and refugee systems must be reformed to act in a fair-minded, swift, and just manner to welcome those fleeing persecution. To do this, Tom will:

- **Extend compassion to those fleeing persecution and reform our asylum policies.** When the most vulnerable reach the U.S. seeking safety and shelter, we have the opportunity to showcase the best of our humanity. Tom will end the [Migrant Protection Protocol](#), known as the Remain in Mexico Policy, which has forced [thousands](#) of migrants to live in dangerous, informal camps in Mexico while awaiting an asylum decision by the United States. This policy has exposed too many to physical and sexual violence, as well as economic hardship — conditions these families fled in the first place. He will end metering at ports of entry and ‘safe third country’ agreements. He will institute a robust case management system in which asylees may enter the U.S., remain in safety while their asylum case is being processed, and can obtain temporary work permits so they can productively fulfill their family’s needs while waiting for this claim. A Steyer Administration will increase financial and staff resources for processing asylum cases.

- **Revitalize our refugee program.** A Steyer Administration will restore refugee admissions to the U.S. to the levels maintained under President Obama in the first year. It will thereafter increase the number of refugees admitted in line with our international obligations. Tom will work with the international community to defend human rights, honor the rule of law, and prepare for and mitigate global migration.
- **Extend financial aid and technical resources to Central America.** Immigrants are [fleeing violence and extreme poverty](#) in the countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. A Steyer Administration will work with these countries' leaders and with the U.N. High Commissioner of Refugees in Central America to help find placements for displaced persons, including in the U.S. Tom will also lead the international community to extend resources to Northern Triangle nations for humanitarian relief, economic partnerships, and institutional strengthening.
- **Recognize the devastating impacts of climate change and the need to prepare for increased global migration.** As the climate crisis escalates, Tom will help people recover from disasters within their communities by contributing funding, equipment, and expertise to help countries improve disaster response, alleviate critical short-term resource scarcities, and institute an effective recovery. He will establish new categories to ensure persons fleeing from climate related disasters and conflicts are eligible for legal entry to the United States. Through his [Justice-Centered Climate Plan](#), Tom will lead the way by setting ambitious carbon reduction goals to stave off the worst climate impacts.

### **Tom will encourage civic engagement and community-led cultural, economic, and social integration.**

Throughout American history, immigrants have brought their culture, experiences, and expertise to our shores. Once here, they become Americans and help us strengthen our nation. To ensure that all people who call America home have access to the tools and opportunities to secure a better life and build the American economy, Tom will:

- **Invest in civic engagement and a stronger democracy.** The organization Tom founded, NextGen America, ran a [large-scale voter registration](#) and engagement drive to help elect leaders who embrace our country's immigrant communities. Through this work, Tom knows the importance of ensuring that every American feels connected to our democratic process. As President, Tom will continue to work with community organizations to welcome immigrants to America and help them feel at home. He will direct the census to ensure that immigrant and mixed-status communities are fully counted. He will work with new Americans to ensure their access to the polls, including through automatic voter registration, vote-at-home, and voter education.
- **Ensure that immigrants have the opportunities to help themselves and their communities thrive.** A Steyer Administration will also ensure that all undocumented communities have access to affordable and safe housing and [healthcare](#), including

access to his public option plan. Taxpayers will be eligible for healthcare tax credits under the Affordable Care Act. Tom will extend Pell Grants and Federal student loans to students on DACA. But immigrant integration is more than policies, Tom will launch a national Office of New Americans that will work with community organizations to provide a safe platform for immigrants to share their culture and celebrate their heritage, foster opportunities for public service that support new Americans, and coordinate with Federal agencies and the private sector in order to build workforce training and fellowship opportunities for immigrants with professional qualifications from their home nation to help them leverage their specialized skills in the American marketplace.

- **Protect all American Workers.** The success of many American businesses [and industries](#) rely on immigrant labor. While workers are protected under Federal law regardless of immigration status, undocumented workers often find themselves excluded from worker protections that citizens enjoy because they are afraid of reporting labor violations to the authorities. Tom will create secure pathways for undocumented workers to report violations to the Department of Labor and institute strong whistleblower protections, including deferred action, for undocumented workers who bravely speak up about abuse. A Steyer Administration will work with advocacy groups to build trust in these processes, while building capacity to enforce existing workforce protections.
- **Recognize the importance of the borderlands to our communities and economy.** America benefits from being a welcoming nation to commerce and travel. For generations, families on both sides of the border traveled freely across them. They owned homes and held jobs on alternate sides of the international line. In recent years, these relationships have become strained due to vitriolic and ill-informed arguments, which have only created the stagnation of the economies of our border towns; we must reignite and revitalize those relationships. Tom will work with state and local jurisdictions on the border to ensure they have the opportunity to help shape federal policies through robust outreach and open comment periods to address their needs, leveraging their deep regional expertise.
- **Partner with state and local governments to support immigrant communities.** Immigration is a federal issue, yet immigrants also call state and local jurisdictions home. They have stepped up to welcome immigrants in many ways. States have passed Sanctuary State laws to protect communities from deportation, state-level DREAM Acts to open higher education opportunities, and laws that enable undocumented residents to get ID cards or drivers' licenses. They have ensured that all kids can access public education. Tom will work with other governments and nonprofits to build community services to support immigrants, including opportunities for immigrants to join in [national public service programs](#). These programs will offer valuable training and career experience to participants while helping to provide direct support services to immigrant communities.