



Why advocate to your members of Congress?

As a constituent, you are an agent in the democratic system. You have a right to advocate, and your elected members need to hear from you. The relationship you build can influence the policy-maker's decision. Congress oversees the work of the Department of Homeland security, including budgetary appropriations, and Congress can pass legislation to fix many of the issues raised below. Although the Executive Branch holds the responsibility for immigration policy enforcement, Congress holds the key to passing legislation that can override harmful enforcement decisions. They can make decisions that ensure people have access to due process, to safer ways of entering the country, and to pathways to citizenship. They can make decisions to ensure asylum seekers are not detained and families are not separated. Ultimately, they hold the key to this process. Your voice matters!

Which Congressional Committees address issues related to immigration?

All representatives have a vote in immigration related legislation and should be visited. Members of some committees in the House of Representatives and the Senate¹ have particular influence over matters of immigration. These members influence bills that come out of their committee to be discussed on the floor of each chamber and provide oversight of various departments that carry out work related to immigration and refugees. It is important to research to see if your elected official sits on one of these committees. This knowledge helps frame the conversation with those officials.

Committees:

House of Representatives – Judiciary (Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship), Homeland Security, Education and Labor, Appropriations

Senate – Judiciary (Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration), Homeland Security and Government Affairs, Appropriations

2022 issues to raise to your members of Congress:

1. Restoring Asylum Protections

We have witnessed helpful decisions. In February 2021, President Biden created a task force to assist with the reunification of families. In February 2021, the State Department announced the termination of the asylum cooperative agreements that required asylum seekers to request asylum in northern Central American.² However, not all harmful policies have ended.

Other policies have been terminated by the Biden Administration but remain in place because of court decisions, such as the CDC regulation Title 42.³ These policies make it nearly impossible to claim asylum and leave people in dangerous and harmful situations. Even attempts to ease the asylum claims backlog in immigration courts via the administration's plan to process asylum claims by trained asylum officers have been halted.⁴

¹ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/committees/>

² <https://www.state.gov/suspending-and-terminating-the-asylum-cooperative-agreements-with-the-governments-el-salvador-guatemala-and-honduras/>

³ [Federal judge blocks Biden's termination of Title 42 | TPR](#)

⁴ [Texas challenges Biden administration rule on asylum processing at border | Reuters](#)



Harm continues, and asylum protections are weakened. Families continue to be separated through policies that make asylum-based entry in the United States unviable. Under policies like Title 42, many adults are unable to enter the US to ask for asylum. Thus, families make the difficult decisions to send their children alone. Questions loom about whether the government has upheld the due process rights for parents and families, especially as expedited removals continue.⁵ The separation of families and the insistence on detaining asylum seekers shows a desire to deter asylum seekers from entering the U.S. at a time when so many need protection.⁶

A nation's asylum laws are only meaningful if they are honored in times of crisis. The U.S. is not honoring its promises to the world.

Ask your representatives for the following:

- Protect the asylum process. Do not place limitations on what is allowed under the Immigration and Nationality Act. Stop imposing wait times at ports of entry that serve to manufacture crisis, which in turn causes people to choose between homelessness and irregular entry into the U.S.
- Oppose the criminalization of immigration. Make enforcement officers honor asylum law, which allows those seeking protection to ask for asylum, regardless of entry or immigration status.⁷ End the use of expedited removal and detention for asylum seekers.
- Urge an end to family detention and alternatives that include punitive and burdensome surveillance.⁸ Asylum-seeking families must have freedom to access due process, to find lawyers, and to prepare their cases as a family unit.
- Ask for the Fair Day in Court for Kids Act.⁹ Individuals seeking asylum only have access to an attorney if they can afford one, and thus, 80 percent of detained migrants go without a lawyer. This is true even though immigration proceedings affect a person's liberty, family integrity, livelihood, and, in cases of asylum and torture, their very lives. The Fair Day in Court for Kids Act would provide a minor improvement by guaranteeing counsel for unaccompanied children, who currently go without representation as well.

2. Refugee Resettlement

The refugee admission was set at 125,000.¹⁰ The increase is a welcome change so that families may be reunified, and other vulnerable populations may be able to enter the United States. In light of increased numbers of refugees worldwide, refugee rights and humanitarian organizations urge the administration to meet this goal. We must continue to ask our government to restore the nation's humanitarian commitment to refugee resettlement.

Ask your representatives for the following:

- Urge the Department of Homeland Security to prioritize the reunification of family members.

⁵ <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/07/26/dhs-statement-resumption-expedited-removal-certain-family-units>

⁶ <https://genesisofexodusfilm.com/thefilm/>

⁷ <https://www.uscis.gov/ilink/docView/SLB/HTML/SLB/0-0-0-1/0-0-0-29/0-0-0-1687.html>

⁸ [Family Detention | Detention Watch Network](#)

⁹ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2468>

¹⁰ [Memorandum for the Secretary of State on Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2022 | The White House](#)



- Maintain our commitment to refugees by increasing our commitment to 125,000.
- Ask that Congress maintain budgetary commitments for the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

3. Citizenship for All

The Presbyterian Church (USA) supports access to pathways to citizenship for undocumented populations in the United States. The 220th General Assembly (2012) of the PCUSA urges faith and community leaders to advocate for legislation that provides “a reasonable and inclusive path for undocumented migrants presently living in the United States to eventually gain citizenship.”¹¹ Immigrant rights advocates renewed their calls for legislative relief that could open pathways to citizenship for undocumented individuals. Several legislative measures have passed the House of Representatives. As witnessed during the coronavirus pandemic, nearly 70% of undocumented persons in the labor force are considered essential workers.¹² Their contributions to family, community, and country are critical.

Ask your representatives for the following:

- Support “clean” bills that allow for the quickest and least cumbersome pathway to citizenship for all undocumented persons residing in the United States.
- Communities of color are excessively monitored by law enforcement leading to increased rates of arrest and incarceration. Urge Congressional officials to take this into consideration when establishing regulations about who can access pathways to citizenship.
- Legislative reforms should not tag on other conditions, like an increase in border militarization or immigration enforcement measures, which further add to the distress of all migrant populations in the U.S.

4. Appropriations – Interior and Exterior Enforcement

In a time when we have witnessed friends and family torn from our communities¹³ and unspeakable harms visited to those only seeking safety at our borders, all in the name of enforcement and rule of law, it is time to question the current funding of these agencies—not to increase it.

Ask your representatives for the following:

- Do not increase the funding of Customs and Border Protection or Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Do not increase the numbers of officers, agents, detention beds, or extend walls.
- Demand independent monitoring systems for both agencies and the private institutions with which they contract.
- Begin discussions about how to reform the mandate and focus of these agencies. Their blind enforcement and selective application of laws and rights have damaged families, communities, and economies in the interior and the borderlands of the U.S.

¹¹ https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/ga220-immigration-comprehensive.pdf

¹² <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/study-says-69-undocumented-immigrant-workers-hold-essential-jobs-to-fight-covid>

¹³ <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/supporting-immigrants/>