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US Senate

*Topic A: "The Ever-growing Immigration
Problem in the USA."*

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I. COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The General Assembly is the first committee of the United Nations (UN). Here, delegates meet to discuss contentious issues, mainly those related to international peace and security. As well as this, the General Assembly is also responsible for overseeing the UN budget, the general functioning of the organization and the admission of new members.

Today, the General Assembly is made up of 193 UN members, each of whom has a voice and a vote. And all have a collaborative responsibility to find solutions on important issues such as political, humanitarian, social, economic and legal matters. Its objective is to reach a general agreement to achieve the 4 purposes of the UN. Such as: to maintain international peace and security, to foster relations between nations and to favor international cooperation to solve problems and always respect human rights.

II. HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

Immigration has been a controversial topic and a touchstone of the U.S. political debate for decades, with many opinions on the topic, with the considerations of economic, security, and humanitarian concerns. Congress and the Senate have not been able to reach an agreement or middle ground on this specific topic and on a comprehensive immigration reform for years. This seems like a topic no one is willing to talk about, whether it is for political, economic, or humane concerns.

The topic seemed to be “solved” in the Obama term to some degree, yet former President Donald Trump put the issues back at the center of public debate with some questionable at best points of view on this issue, and with his unprecedented efforts to curb immigration and reshape asylum policy on the country as a whole. Current President Joe Biden pledged to reverse Trump’s actions and reform the already destroyed system, but the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and a great influx of migrants have complicated his plans.

The real question is, why is a country full of immigrants, such as the US, having such an issue regarding the same topic which is the reason most of them are here today, immigration?

B. Evolution of the topic

The United States of America is a country that historically has been created and made by immigrants from all over the world, its founding fathers all of them descendants of immigrants alike. In the present day, immigrants comprise almost 14 percent of the U.S. population, or nearly 45 million people out of a total of about 328 million in 2019, according to the Census Bureau. Together, immigrants and their U.S.-born children make up about 26 percent of U.S. inhabitants.

The share of the population that is foreign-born has steadily risen since 1970, when there were fewer than ten million immigrants in the United States. But there are proportionally fewer immigrants today than in 1890, when foreign-born residents comprised nearly 15 percent of the population.

As time progresses, immigrants from Latin American and Asian countries are becoming not only a racial minority, but a majority on that right, the number of latino people in the country surpassing the number of african-american citizens at this point.

As of 2018, Mexico was the most common country of origin for U.S. immigrants, constituting 25 percent of the immigrant population. However, Asia was the top region of origin, with 28 percent of immigrants born there. There's also been a spike in Central and South American immigration to the US in the last few years, the number of them growing steadily since 2013.

One of the biggest issues regarding this controversy is undocumented immigration. The undocumented population is estimated to be about eleven million people and has leveled off since its peak before the 2008 economic crisis, which led some to return or be deported to their home countries and discouraged others from coming to the United States. What is not known by the people trying to immigrate, is that the US is one of the hardest countries to do this same thing, ranking at number three worldwide as the hardest country to immigrate to legally.

Most immigrants can come to the U.S. on temporary visas for students, tourists and skilled workers. The US government is not shy when it comes to these types of visas, since they present value and profit brought into the country. In fact, in 2016, the U.S. gave out slightly more than 10 million.

But, to stay, live and work in the U.S., immigrants need a “green card,” which is the only way to ultimately become a U.S. citizen. It seems as if the US is willing to receive these people when it represents a personal gain to the country, but not when it represents aiding people in desperate need of asylum from their current situations in their home country.

The US has a history of not allowing people to enter, when these same people come from third-world countries, or are from a lower economic status from what’s desired, not allowing people to have the proper documentation to stay. But does this same thing stop people from trying their hand at the so-called “American Dream”, not really.

The United States granted about one million individuals legal permanent residency in fiscal year 2019, which is roughly on par with most years since the early 1990s. More than two-thirds of them were admitted on the basis of family reunification.

In July 2021, Customs and Border Protection reported more than 212,000 encounters with people trying to cross the southern border, the highest monthly figure in two decades. And this number only accounts for the people encountered. Estimates in 2016 put the number of unauthorized immigrants at 10.7 million, representing 3.3% of the total U.S. population.

Generally, these immigrants coming from the borders come not only for work but to make asylum claims, and many of them are unaccompanied children. Some of these immigrants have different legal rights from Mexican nationals in the United States, allowing them to receive a hearing in court, before being deported to their home country. The spike in Central American migration has strained the U.S. immigration system, with more than 1.2 million cases pending in immigration courts.

Though many of the policies that aim to reduce unlawful immigration focus on enforcement at the border, on the individuals coming to the country without any documentation at all, a significant portion of the undocumented population arrive in the United States legally and overstay their student and work visas. A Center for Migration Studies report found that, in 2010–2018, individuals who overstayed their visas far outnumbered those who arrived by crossing the border illegally.

The last two presidential terms, with Obama and Trump respectively show two widely different approaches to the issue. Obama took several executive actions to provide temporary legal protections for undocumented immigrants, and Trump on the other hand, he advocated for sharply reducing both legal and illegal immigration.

C. Relevant events

DACA

In 2012, the Obama administration began a program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which was offered as a hope for illegal immigrants all over the USA. It offered renewable, two-year deportation deferrals and work permits to undocumented immigrants who had arrived in the United States as children and had no criminal records. This allows them a new opportunity to become real residents.

Since then, more than eight hundred thousand people have participated in the program, and 1.7 million more are eligible. Obama attempted to extend similar benefits to undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and permanent residents in a program known as Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), but the Supreme Court effectively killed the program in 2016.

C. The Pandemic on Immigration

Ever since the infamous COVID-19 virus infected the world, travel restrictions and requirements have affected immigrants and travelers worldwide. The Trump administration further restricted immigration amid the COVID-19 pandemic by a specific set of actions. By curbing travel to the United States, turning away most migrants in the U.S.-Mexico border, and suspending the processing of many foreign worker visas and green cards.

These were framed as necessary to limit the virus's spread and protect American jobs, but critics accused Trump of using the public health crisis to further his anti-immigration agenda. Some argued that the detention and deportation of migrants during the pandemic fueled the virus's spread.

The current Biden administration has maintained most pandemic-related restrictions. Most notably, he has kept in place a pandemic-related public health order that allows for immediate expulsion of apprehended migrants, though he has exempted unaccompanied children and some adults.

III. CURRENT ISSUES

A. Points of view

As it is well known, the USA is ruled by two main political parties, which both have widely different points of view in many issues, especially regarding immigration.

Democrat Party

As a core of the party's values, Democrats view immigration policy as an opportunity to renew the "American Community."

Although the Democrats recognize the need to secure the borders, including additional personnel, infrastructure and technology at the borders and ports of entries, and enforce existing immigration laws, they understand the “need [for] comprehensive immigration reform, not just piecemeal efforts.” To this day, “comprehensive” immigration reform remains a top priority for Democrats.

One of its specific plans to tackle this issue is to increase and facilitate the approval of family-based and employment based immigrant visas; improving the naturalization process; and addressing the dysfunctional immigration bureaucracy. Furthermore, the Democratic platform supports a path for undocumented immigrants to become legal permanent residents, or in their words to “get right with the law.”

Republican Party

For Republicans, their approach to immigration policy is clear: immigration is a national security issue. Their main concerns regarding this is terrorism, drug cartels and criminal gangs, Republicans stress the need to track persons entering and exiting the United States and that “allowing millions of unidentified persons to enter and remain in this country poses grave risks.” Republicans push for the creation of the border fence between the United States and Mexico and the securing of the US southern borders.

Complimenting border security, the party also advocates for a strict enforcement policy. Specifically, the platform calls for immigration enforcement at places of employment, including prosecution for using false security numbers; limiting the rights of aliens in deportation proceedings; tracking down aliens who overstay their visas; and denying federal funds to “sanctuary cities.”

The General Population

A 2020 Gallup poll found that 77 percent of Americans surveyed considered immigration a good thing for the United States, the highest level in two decades. At the same time, however, majorities felt that illegal immigration was a significant threat and that immigration should be kept at the same level or decreased.

According to a separate poll conducted by Vox and Data for Progress the following year, 69 percent of voters surveyed—including a majority of Republicans—supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants if they meet certain requirements. A greater share (72 percent) supported citizenship for immigrants brought to the United States when they were minors, who are often referred to as Dreamers.

I. CONCLUSION

The issue of immigration in the United States needs to be tackled with the utmost care and consideration for all of the parties involved, those being the government, the legal citizens, and the same immigrants. The pros and cons regarding this issue are both great in size, the immigration being good for the economy, and bad for the already living individuals in the US. Both political parties must come to an agreement regarding this topic, because if the problem is left untreated, it shall grow to something uncontrollable. Something to take into consideration is that whatever decision the Senate comes to will affect the lives of millions all over the US, and all over the world.

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