



## 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 Senate](#)<sup>1</sup> 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

## 2024 issues to raise to your members of Congress:

### 1. Restoring Asylum Protections

Harm continues as asylum protections are weakened. Access to asylum protection has become a political negotiating tool. As a human right, individuals and families have a right to seek safety in the United States. Instead of seeking ways that maintain safety and security, [these policies](#)<sup>2</sup> make it nearly [impossible to claim asylum](#)<sup>3</sup> and leave people in dangerous and harmful situations. These [policies will be implemented in October](#).<sup>4</sup> [Faith leaders speak](#)<sup>5</sup> out against such policies knowing consequences will feed more suffering saying policies at the border should reflect values we hold in our teachings of faith, “remembering that every life is sacred and that every person deserves a fair assessment of their claim for protection.”

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2024/06/04/fact-sheet-presidential-proclamation-suspend-and-limit-entry-and-joint-dhs-doj>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2024/06/04/nx-s1-4991917/biden-executive-order-asylum-migration-border>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/10/07/2024-22602/securing-the-border>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.interfaithimmigration.org/2024/10/09/faith-leaders-secure-the-border-fr/>



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.<sup>6</sup> The reliance on deterrence measures means due process is limited or ignored. 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.<sup>7</sup>

As the administration changes in 2025, it is imperative to maintain high levels of civic engagement with elected officials. It is necessary to urge lawmakers to remain committed to leaning into values of care and protection for vulnerable populations on the move. Asylum laws have been guiding principles for how the United States is accountable to receive, support, and provide protection. We as people of faith should encourage policies that are created and implemented with a human-rights framework.

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.**<sup>9</sup> Asylum-seeking families must have freedom to access due process, to find lawyers, and to prepare their cases as a family unit.

## 2. Refugee Resettlement

The [refugee admission was set](#) at 125,000.<sup>10</sup> 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.

As we celebrate this increase in the admissions, there is a need to urge Congressional leaders to maintain robust funding for refugee resettlement. It is only possible to re-settle more families with local affiliates staffed by expert staff. Refugees have had [profound economic and social impacts](#) on their host communities in the United States.<sup>11</sup> Refugee resettlement has been a significant ministry

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/texas-challenges-biden-administration-rule-asylum-processing-border-2022-04-28/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://genesisofexodusfilm.com/thefilm/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/ilink/docView/SLB/HTML/SLB/0-0-0-1/0-0-0-29/0-0-0-1687.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/issues/family-detention>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/legislation/2024/09/30/memorandum-on-the-presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2025/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/news/new-report-reveals-refugees-profound-economic-contributions-and-integration-united-states>



for many Presbyterians, especially since World War II. It is a critical time to ensure resettlement programs and services continue in 2025 and beyond.

***Ask your representatives for the following:***

- Urge the Department of Homeland Security to prioritize the reunification of family members.
- Maintain our commitment to refugees by increasing our commitment to 125,000.
- Ask that Congress maintain robust budgetary commitments for the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

### **3. Citizenship for All**

The Presbyterian Church (USA) supports access to pathways to citizenship for populations who lack immigration statuses in the United States. The [220<sup>th</sup> 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.”<sup>12</sup> 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 persons without immigration status in the labor force are considered [essential workers](#).<sup>13</sup> Their contributions to family, community, and country are critical.

It is estimated that at least [1 out of every 15 US citizens](#) lives with a person who does not have access to immigration status.<sup>14</sup> Mixed status families are becoming more common in our communities. Seeking pathways to citizenship can also benefit individuals and families who are in the United States on temporary statuses. This is a matter of building healthier communities and healthier worshipping opportunities.

***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. Urge for the immediate passing of a clean Dream Act.
- 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 communities](#)<sup>15</sup> and unspeakable harms visited to those only seeking safety at our borders, all in the name of enforcement and rule of

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/ga220-immigration-comprehensive.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/ga220-immigration-comprehensive.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/study-says-69-undocumented-immigrant-workers-hold-essential-jobs-to-fight-covid>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.fwd.us/news/mixed-status-families-jan/#methodology>

<sup>15</sup> <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/supporting-immigrants/>



law, it is time to question the current funding of these agencies—not to increase it. The new administration has been discussing unprecedented expansion of arrest and deportation procedures. Many of these plans exclude or disregard methods for due process and prosecutorial discretion, which could lead to harm and fear. Please contact your elected officials to discuss budgetary cuts.

***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.
- Demand that immigration enforcement be conducted by federal law officials. They are to be trained in implementation and enforcement procedures. Involving state and local officials to implement federal law opens the door to the misapplication of policies without a process to appeal.