

AFL-CIO

— STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD —

Senate Judiciary Subcommittee Hearing

How Mass Deportations Will Separate American Families, Harm Our Armed Forces, and Devastate Our Economy

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

The AFL-CIO is a federation of 60 affiliated unions representing more than 12.5 million workers across all sectors of our economy. Our members work in every state in the nation and they come from every region of the world. Like the workforce as a whole, our membership consists of people with all types of immigration status. Together, we strive to ensure that every person who works in this country receives decent pay, good benefits, safe working conditions, and fair treatment on the job.

We commend the Committee for convening this important hearing. In addition to separating families, harming our armed forces, and devastating our economy, the agenda of mass deportations is a deeply anti-worker agenda. Here's why:

Immigrants are vital members of our workforce and our unions. One in five workers in our country wasn't born here. Immigrants work in every sector of our economy, and every part of the nation. Mass deportation plans would not only cost billions in taxpayer money, but would have a devastating economic impact. The resulting labor shortage would cause a massive drop in GDP and cripple key industries that rely heavily on immigrant labor, such as construction, hospitality, agriculture, and food processing. Rather than benefitting the remaining workforce, mass deportations amidst an already tight labor market will shutter businesses, which will disrupt supply chains, increase prices and put jobs at risk.

Without immigrants, our workforce is shrinking. Current demographic trends illustrate that without immigration, the size of our nation's workforce will decline, causing serious economic and social consequences¹. A shrinking workforce is bad for the economy, resulting in lower productivity, slower economic growth, decreased tax revenue, and higher inflation. Deporting millions of workers will accelerate these negative trends and drive up costs for food, housing, and many basic services, because there will be an insufficient supply of workers in these industries to produce sufficient supply of goods and services to meet demand.

Immigrants pay taxes on which federal, state and local budgets rely. In addition to expanding the workforce, immigrants promote economic growth through their consumer spending and tax revenues. Immigrant households contribute hundreds of billions of dollars

¹ United States Census Bureau, "[U.S. Population Projected to Begin Declining in Second Half of Century](#)," Press Release Number CB23-189, November 9, 2023.

in federal, state and local taxes annually and hold a tremendous amount of spending power. In 2021, immigrants paid \$524.7 billion in taxes.² Losing contributions of this magnitude would devastate the budgets needed to fund our public schools, hospitals, emergency response services, highways and other essential services.

Immigrants support our social safety net. Despite political attempts to portray them as a drain on resources, undocumented immigrants are taxpayers who also make substantial contributions to our social safety net, with estimates that they paid \$22.6 billion into the Social Security fund in 2016 and \$5.7 billion to Medicare³. Notably, many immigrant workers are unable to access the very benefits they help keep afloat.

The cost of mass deportation drains resources from key labor priorities. Our government already spends an astonishing 12 times more to arrest immigrants than it does to enforce the laws meant to protect more than 150 million workers at more than 10 million jobsites around the country.⁴ This has created an environment in which too many employers feel like they can violate worker rights with impunity, and further ramping up immigration enforcement will make employer threats of immigration-based retaliation even more potent.

A climate of fear makes our workplaces and communities less safe. Mass deportation policies threaten civil liberties, encourage racial profiling, separate families and cause massive economic and emotional hardship for millions of working people across the country. The terror instilled by raids and targeting means that fewer people report crimes, visit a doctor, or send their kids to school—all of which undermines the health, wellbeing and safety of our communities.

The real threat workers face is corporate greed, not immigrants. President-elect Trump wants working people to focus on the border and immigration so we'll be too distracted to notice as they roll out massive corporate tax cuts, slash our benefits, starve our public schools, and trample on our labor and voting rights. It is a classic political maneuver meant to keep us divided and poor, and we see right through it.

For these reasons and many more, the mass deportation agenda is not just bad for immigrants, but for every worker in this country. We urge members of the Committee to reject this destructive approach, and instead return focus to comprehensive reform of our unjust immigration system in ways that center a pathway to citizenship and ensure all workers are able to live and work safely and with dignity.

² [U.S. Immigration Statistics](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/u-s-immigration-statistics) | American Immigration Council (americanimmigrationcouncil.org)

³ [Mass Deportation: Devastating Costs to America, Its Budget and Economy](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/mass-deportation-devastating-costs-to-america-its-budget-and-economy) | American Immigration Council (https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org)

⁴ [Immigration enforcement is funded at a much higher rate than labor standards enforcement—and the gap is widening](https://www.epi.org/publication/immigration-enforcement-is-funded-at-a-much-higher-rate-than-labor-standards-enforcement-and-the-gap-is-widening) | Economic Policy Institute (epi.org)