

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION **table.**

An Evangelical Immigration Agenda for the 119th Congress and the New Administration

Since 2012, the Evangelical Immigration Table has advocated for immigration reforms consistent with biblical principles, guided by a statement that has been affirmed by a broad range of evangelical denominational leaders, Christian college and seminary presidents, parachurch ministry leaders and thousands of local pastors throughout the United States. Specifically, the [Evangelical Statement of Principle for Immigration Reform](#) calls for bipartisan immigration reform that:

- Respects the God-given dignity of every person
- Protects the unity of the immediate family
- Respects the rule of law
- Guarantees secure national borders
- Ensures fairness to taxpayers
- Establishes a path toward legal status and/or citizenship for those who qualify and who wish to become permanent residents

Subsequently, the Evangelical Immigration Table published an e-book, [Thinking Biblically about Immigrants and Immigration Reform](#), that elaborates on each of these six foundational principles from a biblical perspective. Over the years, the leadership of the Evangelical Immigration Table has issued [letters and statements](#) on particular immigration actions and policy concerns, rooted in these principles that would both respect the rule of law and keep families together.

As a new Congress and a new presidential administration will be sworn in in January 2025, the Evangelical Immigration Table offers several key policy recommendations, guided by our biblical principles.



We Urge Republicans, Democrats and Independents in the 119h Congress to Work Together To:

- **Ensure secure, orderly national borders**, investing the resources necessary to ensure the personnel, infrastructure and technology to apprehend those who enter the United States unlawfully, to manage lawful entries in a secure and efficient way and to halt the entry of drugs and other unlawful substances, whether at or between ports of entry. We can and must both be a compassionate nation that treats all people humanely and protects due process for those with a professed fear of persecution while also protecting the wellbeing and security of U.S. citizens.
- **Create a solution for Dreamers to apply for permanent legal status and citizenship.** We recognize that Dreamers are a special category of immigrants because they arrived as children, and our laws should not hold children responsible for decisions which were made by others on their behalf. How we treat this category of immigrants is therefore not just a policy or political issue, it is a moral issue. We believe our government should provide a pathway to permanent legal status and eventual citizenship for eligible Dreamers without penalty. This policy is particularly urgent given pending legal challenges to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which could lead hundreds of thousands of Dreamers who have been lawfully residing and working in the United States for a decade or longer to lose their legal protections and become at risk of deportation, harming them, their families (including many U.S. citizen minor children), their employers and their churches. We affirm President-elect Trump's recent call to find a bipartisan solution to this situation.
- **Pass a Restitution-Based Immigration Reform** that would allow other immigrants who are present in the U.S. unlawfully – who entered as adults – to earn Lawful Permanent Resident status if they pass a criminal background check – ensuring that they have not been convicted of any violent criminal offense – and pay a significant fine, in recognition of and restitution for their violation of immigration law. Such an earned legalization process, outlined in an [Evangelical Call for Restitution-Based Immigration Reform](#), would avoid the extremes of either an amnesty policy – which would simply forgive the offense of having either overstayed a visa or entered the country unlawfully, undermining the rule of law – or a policy of deporting all immigrants in the country unlawfully, which would be incredibly costly to taxpayers and would likely result in large numbers of families being separated.

- **Facilitate orderly, legal immigration processes**, including for close relatives of U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents, for the essential workers upon whom our national economy relies and for some of the most vulnerable individuals seeking refuge from persecution. We affirm President-elect Trump's recent statement that "We want people to come in... but they have to come in with love for the country. They have to come in legally," and Congress must ensure orderly, efficient processes to facilitate such legal immigration.
- **Reintroduce and pass the Adoptee Citizenship Act**, a bipartisan bill that would correct an oversight in existing law. Under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000, most children adopted from foreign countries by U.S. citizen parents are guaranteed U.S. citizenship, but an estimated 35,000 adoptees who were already 18 years or older when this law went into effect were not included. As a result, though children of U.S. citizen parents, these individuals lack the benefits of U.S. citizenship and could even be subject to deportation. The Adoptee Citizenship Act should be passed to rectify this situation and provide clarity of legal status and citizenship to these individuals.
- **Consider legislative reforms to the U.S. asylum system** that would guarantee due process for those who profess to be fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution, including those persecuted on account of their Christian faith, but would allow for processing in a timely fashion without routine releases of individuals to the interior of the United States to await court proceedings that typically last many years. This situation has fueled a humanitarian crisis at our borders in recent years and urgently needs reform, but Congress must do so in ways that protect due process for those fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution, lest we return individuals who should qualify under longstanding U.S. laws to be persecuted or even killed.
- **Reintroduce and pass the Afghan Adjustment Act**, a bipartisan bill that would allow Afghans brought to the U.S. with parole after the fall of Kabul, including many at risk because of their service to the U.S. military, to apply for permanent legal status if they first pass rigorous vetting procedures. According to a 2024 Lifeway Research poll, this sort of a policy is supported by three-quarters of all evangelical Christians, and it is also supported by many prominent veterans' groups.

- **Appropriate funding necessary to strengthen border security, facilitate legal immigration processes, and to address the root causes that fuel emigration.** In particular, Congress should:
 - Ensure that the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services can appropriately adjudicate lawful immigration requests in a timely manner, consistent with President-elect Trump's stated support for legal immigration processes.
 - Ensure that Customs and Border Protection has adequate resources to apprehend or deter individuals seeking to enter the United States unlawfully, to treat humanely those in its custody and to efficiently process travelers, immigrants and asylum seekers at lawful ports of entry.
 - Provide the resources necessary to sustain the overseas processing and vetting of refugees and the resettlement of refugees within the U.S., in partnership with faith-based and non-profit organizations.
 - Fund additional asylum officers and immigration judges to ensure due process protections and significantly reduce the years-long backlog for asylum cases and other immigration court cases.
 - Ensure that the Department of Health and Human Services has adequate capacity to humanely care for unaccompanied children who are placed into its temporary care and quickly reunify them with their own families or other carefully-vetted sponsors, while addressing significant problems that in some cases have led children to be placed into unsafe situations or to not be adequately tracked once being released to a sponsor.
 - Strengthen the capacity of the U.S. Agency for International Development and its partners, including faith-based organizations, to address the root causes that lead many people to make the difficult decision to emigrate, including extreme poverty, violence, corruption and environmental degradation in foreign countries, along with communication efforts to educate those abroad about eligibility for asylum under U.S. law.
 - Refrain from appropriating funds that would likely be used for immigration enforcement exercises that would separate families on a large scale, such as to deport longtime residents of the country who are the parents of U.S. citizen minor children.

We Urge the Trump Administration To:

- **Sustain the U.S. refugee resettlement program** by setting the annual refugee ceiling at a level consistent with the resettlement program's history – at least at the 50,000 annual ceiling that President Trump established in his first week of his first term in office, and ideally higher, in light of the unprecedented scale of the global refugee crisis. We affirm the importance of a strong, timely vetting process to ensure that those admitted as refugees to the U.S. meet the legal requirements and do not present a public safety or public health risk to the United States. A robust refugee resettlement program allows the U.S. to offer safety and religious freedom to those persecuted for their faith, including persecuted Christians, as well as to those persecuted for other reasons while minimizing the number of individuals who feel their only option to find safety in the United States is to seek asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border. We urge the administration to preserve the innovative Welcome Corps private sponsorship process that allows U.S. churches and other groups of Americans to sponsor specific refugee families for resettlement, which both has proven to be an important tool for offering refuge to specific individuals and families who have faced religious persecution and expands the national resettlement capacity at minimal expense to taxpayers.
- **Ensure secure, orderly borders** by working with Congress to provide additional resources for both the Border Patrol and for Customs and Border Protection agents operating at lawful ports of entry. Such resources ensure the staffing, technology and physical barriers to apprehend all of those who seek to enter the United States unlawfully are available while also ensuring adequate capacity to provide due process for those who profess to be fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution. A secure, orderly border also requires having the resources and facilities to treat all people humanely, recognizing that each person is made in the image of God with inherent dignity. We urge the administration to ensure secure borders while refraining from any policies that would separate children from their parents.
- **Prioritize immigration enforcement efforts on individuals convicted of serious violent offenses or who otherwise pose a credible public safety threat**, rather than utilizing limited resources to remove individuals who have resided in the United States for many years without committing any serious criminal offense, many of whom are members of local churches and have U.S. citizen minor children. We urge the administration to continue to respect longstanding guidance that limits immigration enforcement in “sensitive locations” such as church services and ministry sites, out of respect for religious freedom, as the government should not take actions that would have the effect of scaring people from attending church.

- **Work with Congress to establish a restitution-based legalization process** that would allow unlawfully present individuals whom we do not believe should be a priority for deportation – who have not committed serious criminal offenses – to make amends for their violation of an immigration law many years ago by paying a significant fine. We also urge the administration not to withdraw legal protections and employment authorization from individuals who are currently in the country lawfully, including individuals with parole, Deferred Action, Deferred Enforced Departure or Temporary Protected Status from countries such as Afghanistan, Ukraine, Venezuela, El Salvador, Haiti and others.
- **Protect vulnerable children** by complying fully with relevant provisions of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and the Homeland Security Act. The administration should fully respect the terms of the Flores settlement agreement, ensuring that children are held in the least restrictive setting and allowed to remain safely with their parent(s) except in the most rare of circumstances.
- **Ensure fair and efficient access to student visas** for international students seeking to access educational opportunities in the United States, including at Christian colleges, universities and seminaries. Access to these non-immigrant visas present a vital way that the United States can advance both its national interests and allow Christian institutions to advance their global mission.

As Christian leaders, we commit to:

- **Pray** for each Senator, Representative and President-elect Trump, as well as his cabinet and the staff who support these leaders, consistent with the Apostle Paul’s instruction to pray for “all those in authority” (1 Timothy 2:2). We pray that all our leaders will put the well-being of our country above partisan politics or personal gain.
- **Exhort those under our spiritual leadership to approach both the immigrants in their communities and congregations and questions of immigration policy in ways guided by the Bible**, providing opportunities and resources for discipleship rooted in God’s love for all people.
- **Encourage our churches, campuses and organizations to welcome newly arrived immigrants and refugees into our communities**, offering tangible assistance as churches and other faith-based institutions have done throughout our history.

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The Evangelical Immigration Table is a broad coalition of evangelical organizations and leaders advocating for immigration reform consistent with biblical values. Leadership organizations include the Asian American Christian Collaborative, Bethany Christian Services, the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, the Wesleyan Church, and World Relief.