



UNITED STATES SENATE
BUDGET COMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER CHUCK GRASSLEY

Opening Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee
Hearing on “Unlocking America’s Potential: How Immigration Fuels Economic Growth and
Our Competitive Advantage”
Wednesday, September 13, 2023

[VIDEO](#)

Over the August break, I completed my annual tour of Iowa. For the 43rd straight year, I held at least one town hall style meeting in each of Iowa’s 99 counties. These meetings allow me to hear directly from my fellow Iowans about what’s on their minds.

As an example of listening to what’s on their minds, [Mr. Van Beek](#), who’s here as a witness, came to my Columbus Junction meeting, maybe about two or three years ago, and talked about the very same issue that I presume [he] will speak to us about today...

Immigration is an issue on the minds of many Iowans. Specifically, illegal immigration and securing our nation’s borders. And when our borders are not secured, I think the sovereignty of any nation is compromised.

Every night on our TVs, we see immigrants wading across the Rio Grande. We see immigrants sleeping on the streets of New York City and reports of similar situations in Chicago and Los Angeles.

As he criticized the Biden administration, the Democrat mayor of New York City recently said this crisis will cost New York \$12 billion and destroy the city. In fact, just this Saturday, the New York mayor warned all city agencies could see their budgets cut by 15 percent due to the increased costs of the migrant crisis. So, even Democrats, who have to actually deal with the crisis, admit illegal immigration is a huge cost to taxpayers and society...

President Biden’s lax immigration enforcement has contributed to rising crime in communities across the country. Gangs at the southwest border recruit migrants to bring drugs into the U.S. Those on the terrorism watch list have been apprehended at the border – and who knows how many have evaded apprehension.

In Iowa, Sarah Root was killed in 2016 by an undocumented immigrant driving drunk. The New York City budget cuts could result in no overtime for the city’s police and put public safety even more at risk.

No one can place a cost on the lives and families that have been destroyed by criminals entering our country illegally. These are very real reasons the Biden administration needs to step up and control our borders.

Iowans tell me they are sick and tired of President Biden and the administration not enforcing our immigration laws. We need real reform and consistent enforcement of our existing immigration laws.

President Biden took an oath to enforce our nation’s laws, and yet, he’s not doing so on immigration.

We are a nation of immigrants. We're the most liberal on this issue of any nation on the face of our globe, America welcomed roughly 1.5 million legal immigrants in the year of 2022. These folks followed our immigration laws to their benefit and to our benefit.

Businesses and our economy benefit from a stable and legal workforce. Our communities benefit from the economic contributions of legal immigrants. And immigrants benefit from the opportunities and protections offered when they're here legally.

We all benefit when state, federal and local resources are not drained dealing with people entering our country illegally.

No one benefits from mismanaged borders, policies that incentivize illegal immigration, and poor implementation of legal immigration programs.

My Democratic colleagues argue we need to increase immigration to address a labor shortage. Well, one reason we have a labor shortage is this administration's anti-work agenda. A recent study by the Foundation for Government Accountability found President Biden's expansion of government program benefits has caused 2.4 million Americans to leave work. We need to bring Americans back into the workforce and reform existing programs before we expand immigration.

This morning we'll hear from Mr. Robert Rector. He's tracked the costs of illegal immigration for many years. He'll discuss how the Biden administration's mismanagement of our immigration system has imposed significant financial costs upon our towns, states and the federal government. His testimony will make it clear that relaxing our immigration requirements is unsustainable and the wrong direction to take.

We'll also hear from Dr. Ron Hira about the fraud and abuse of the current H-1B visa program. His message will be: we know the steps needed to improve our current legal immigration programs. And, we must take those steps to protect American workers and foreign-born workers, as well as our economy.

During this past year, Senator Durbin and I re-introduced the bipartisan [H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act](#) to reform and close loopholes in the H-1B and L-1 visa programs.

The H-1B and L-1 visa programs create a pathway for U.S. companies to recruit highly skilled non-citizens when there is a shortage of qualified workers in the country.

Unfortunately, these programs are being abused and mismanaged by a number of companies who displace U.S. workers.

Our legislation, meaning Grassley-Durbin legislation, would reduce fraud and abuse in our immigration system, provide American workers protections against being displaced, and protect foreign workers from being subjected to artificially depressed wages and poor working conditions. Before we entertain any increases in these programs, they have to be fixed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

