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To:

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 8, 2017

PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP'S LETTER TO HOUSE AND SENATE LEADERS & IMMIGRATION PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

President Donald J. Trump's Letter to House and Senate Leaders:

I am pleased to transmit to you my Administration's principles for reforming our Nation's immigration system. In 2012, after the Congress rejected legislation offering legal status and work permits to illegal immigrants, the previous Administration bypassed the Congress and granted those same benefits unilaterally. These actions threatened Congress's status as a coequal branch of Government and have resulted in a surge of illegal immigration.

As President, I took an oath to uphold the Constitution, which makes clear that all legislative powers are vested in the Congress, not the President.

I, therefore, tasked the relevant executive departments and agencies to conduct a bottom-up review of all immigration policies to determine what legislative reforms are essential for America's economic and national security. Rather than asking what policies are supported by special interests, we asked America's law enforcement professionals to identify reforms that are vital to protect the national interest. In response, they identified dangerous loopholes, outdated laws, and easily exploited vulnerabilities in our immigration system - current policies that are harming our country and our communities.

I have enclosed the detailed findings of this effort. These findings outline reforms that must be included as part of any legislation addressing the status of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients. Without these reforms, illegal immigration and chain migration, which severely and unfairly burden American workers and taxpayers, will continue without end.

Immigration reform must create more jobs, higher wages, and greater security for Americans -- now and for future generations. The reforms outlined in the enclosure are necessary to ensure prosperity, opportunity, and safety for every member of our national family.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Trump

IMMIGRATION PRINCIPLES & POLICIES

I. BORDER SECURITY

A. ***Border Wall.*** Our porous southern border presents a clear threat to our national security and public safety, and is exploited by drug traffickers and criminal cartels. The Administration therefore proposes completing construction of a wall along the southern border of the United States.

- i. Ensure funding for the southern border wall and associated infrastructure.
- ii. Authorize the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to raise, collect, and use certain processing fees from immigration benefit applications and border crossings for functions related to border security, physical infrastructure, and law enforcement.
- iii. Improve infrastructure and security on the northern border.

B. ***Unaccompanied Alien Children.*** Loopholes in current law prevent “Unaccompanied Alien Children” (UACs) that arrive in the country illegally from being removed. Rather than being deported, they are instead sheltered by the Department of Health and Human Services at taxpayer expense, and subsequently released to the custody of a parent or family member—who often lack lawful status in the United States themselves. These loopholes in current law create a dramatic pull factor for additional illegal immigration and in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the apprehensions of UACs at our southern border. Therefore, the Administration proposes amending current law to ensure the expeditious return of UACs and family units.

- i. Amend the *William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008* (TVRPA) to treat all UACs the same regardless of their country of origin, so long as they are not victims of human trafficking and can be safely returned home or removed to safe third countries.
- ii. Clarify that alien minors who are *not* UACs (accompanied by a parent or legal guardian or have a parent or legal guardian in the United States available to provide care and physical custody) are not entitled to the presumptions or protections granted to UACs.
- iii. Terminate the Flores Settlement Agreement (FSA) by passing legislation stipulating care standards for minors in custody and clarify corresponding provisions of the TVPRA that supersede the FSA.
- iv. Amend the definition of “special immigrant,” as it pertains to juveniles, to require that the applicant prove that reunification with both parents are not viable due to abuse, neglect,

or abandonment and that the applicant is a victim of trafficking. The current legal definition is abused, and provides another avenue for illicit entry.

v. Repeal the requirement that an asylum officer have initial jurisdiction over UAC asylum applications to expedite processing.

C. *Asylum Reform.* The massive asylum backlog has allowed illegal immigrants to enter and stay in the United States by exploiting asylum loopholes. There are more than 270,000 pending cases in the asylum backlog before USCIS, and approximately 250,000 asylum cases before EOIR. Therefore, the Administration proposes correcting the systemic deficiencies that created that backlog.

i. Significantly tighten standards and eliminate loopholes in our asylum system.

ii. Elevate the threshold standard of proof in credible fear interviews.

iii. Impose and enforce penalties for the filing of frivolous, baseless, or fraudulent asylum applications, and expand the use of expedited removal as appropriate.

iv. Close loopholes in the law to bar terrorist aliens from entering the country and receiving any immigration benefits.

v. Clarify and enhance the legal definition of “aggravated felony” to ensure that criminal aliens do not receive certain immigration benefits.

vi. Expand the ability to return asylum seekers to safe third countries.

vii. Ensure only appropriate use of parole authority for aliens with credible fear or asylum claims, to deter meritless claims and ensure the swift removal of those whose claims are denied.

viii. Prevent aliens who have been granted asylum or who entered as refugees from obtaining lawful permanent resident status if they are convicted of an aggravated felony.

ix. Require review of the asylee or refugee status of an alien who returns to their home country absent a material change in circumstances or country conditions.

D. *Ensure Swift Border Returns.* Immigration judges and supporting personnel face an enormous case backlog, which cripples our ability to remove illegal immigrants in a timely manner. The Administration therefore proposes providing additional resources to reduce the immigration court backlog and ensure

swift return of illegal border crossers.

- i. Seek appropriations to hire an additional 370 immigration judges.
- ii. Establish performance metrics for immigration judges.
- iii. Seek appropriations to hire an additional 1,000 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) attorneys, with sufficient support personnel.
- iv. Ensure sufficient resources for detention.

E. ***Inadmissible Aliens.*** The current statutory grounds for inadmissibility are too narrow, and allow for the admission of individuals who threaten our public safety. Therefore, the Administration proposes expanding the criteria that render aliens inadmissible and ensure that such aliens are maintained in continuous custody until removal.

- i. Expand the grounds of inadmissibility to include gang membership.
- ii. Expand the grounds of inadmissibility to include those who have been convicted of an aggravated felony; identity theft; fraud related to Social Security benefits; domestic violence; child abuse; drunk driving offenses; failure to register as a sex offender; or certain firearm offenses, including the unlawful purchase, sale, possession, or carrying of a firearm.
- iii. Expand the grounds of inadmissibility to include former spouses and children of individuals engaged in drug trafficking and trafficking in persons, if the official determines the divorce was a sham or the family members continue to receive benefits from the illicit activity.

F. ***Discourage Illegal Re-entry.*** Many Americans are victims of crime committed by individuals who have repeatedly entered the United States illegally, which also undermines the integrity of the entire immigration system. Therefore, the Administration proposes increasing penalties for repeat illegal border crossers and those with prior deportations.

G. ***Facilitate the Removal of Illegal Aliens from Partner Nations.*** Current barriers prevent the Federal Government from providing assistance to partner nations for the purpose of removing aliens from third countries whose ultimate intent is entering the United States. Therefore, the Administration proposes authorizing DHS to provide foreign assistance to partner nations to support migration management efforts conducted by those nations. This will allow DHS to improve the ability of Central and South

American countries to curb northbound migration flows and to interrupt ongoing human smuggling, which will also substantially reduce pressures on U.S. taxpayers.

H. ***Expedited Removal.*** Limited categories of aliens are currently subject to expedited removal, which erodes border integrity and control by impeding the ability of the Federal Government to efficiently and quickly remove inadmissible and deportable aliens from the United States. The Administration seeks to expand the grounds of removability and the categories of aliens subject to expedited removal and by ensuring that only aliens with meritorious valid claims of persecution can circumvent expedited removal.

2. ***INTERIOR ENFORCEMENT***

A. ***Sanctuary Cities.*** Hundreds of sanctuary jurisdictions release dangerous criminals and empower violent cartels like MS-13 by refusing to turn over incarcerated criminal aliens to Federal authorities. Therefore, the Administration proposes blocking sanctuary cities from receiving certain grants or cooperative agreements administered or awarded by the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security

- i. Restrict such grants from being issued to:
 - a. Any state or local jurisdiction that fails to cooperate with any United States government entity regarding enforcement of federal immigration laws;
 - b. Any entity that provides services or benefits to aliens not entitled to receive them under existing Federal law; and
 - c. Any state or local jurisdiction that provides more favorable plea agreements or sentencing for alien criminal defendants for the purpose of immigration consequences of convictions.
- ii. Clarify ICE's detainer authority, and States' and localities' ability to honor that authority, so that States will continue to detain an individual pursuant to civil immigration law for up to 48 hours so that ICE may assume custody.
- iii. Provide indemnification for State and local governments to protect them from civil

liability based solely on compliance with immigration detainers and transportation of alien detainees.

iv. Require State and local jurisdictions to provide all information requested by ICE relating to aliens in their custody and the circumstances surrounding their detention.

v. Clarify the definition of a criminal conviction for immigration purposes, to prevent jurisdictions from vacating or modifying criminal convictions to protect illegal immigrants, and roll back erosion of the criminal grounds of removal by courts under the “categorical approach.”

B. *Immigration Authority for States and Localities.* The prior Administration suppressed cooperative partnerships between the Federal Government and State or local governments that wanted to help with immigration enforcement, undermining the security of our communities. Therefore, the Administration proposes enhancing State and local cooperation with Federal immigration law enforcement in order to ensure national security and public safety.

i. Clarify the authority of State and local governments to investigate, arrest, detain, or transfer to Federal custody aliens for purposes of enforcing Federal immigration laws when done in cooperation with DHS.

ii. Authorize State and local governments to pass legislation that will support Federal law enforcement efforts.

iii. Incentivize State and local governments to enter into agreements with the Federal Government regarding immigration enforcement efforts.

iv. Provide the same extent of immunity to State and local law enforcement agencies performing immigration enforcement duties within the scope of their official role as is provided to Federal law enforcement agencies.

C. *Visa Overstays.* Visa overstays account for roughly 40 percent of illegal immigration. The Administration therefore proposes strengthening the removal processes for those who overstay or otherwise violate the terms of their visas, and implementing measures to prevent future visa overstays which may account for a growing percentage of illegal immigration.

i. Discourage visa overstays by classifying such conduct as a misdemeanor.

ii. Require that all nonimmigrant visas held by an alien be cancelled when any one

nonimmigrant visa held by that alien is cancelled, to ensure that if an alien abuses one type of visa, he cannot circumvent the immigration system by then relying on another type of visa to enter the United States.

iii. Bar all visa overstays from immigration benefits for a certain period of time with no waiver.

iv. Clarify that the government does not bear any expense for legal counsel for any visa overstay in removal or related proceedings.

v. Require DHS to provide all available data relating to any deportable alien to the Department of Justice's National Crime Information Center for purposes of that alien's inclusion in the Immigration Violators File, with the exception of aliens who cooperate with DHS on criminal investigations.

vi. Enhance the vetting of bond sponsors for those aliens who enter without inspection, to ensure that bond sponsors undergo thorough background checks prior to being eligible to post or receive a bond.

vii. Permit the Department of State to release certain visa records to foreign governments on a case-by-case basis when sharing is in the U.S. national interest.

viii. Permit the Department of State to review the criminal background of foreign diplomats or government officials contained in the National Crime Information Center database before visa adjudication, regardless of whether the applicant's fingerprints are in the database.

D. **Necessary Resources.** The relatively small number of ICE officers is grossly inadequate to serve a nation of 320 million people with tens of millions of tourists and visitors crossing U.S. ports of entry every year. Therefore, the Administration proposes providing more resources that are vitally needed to enforce visa laws, restore immigration enforcement, and dismantle criminal gangs, networks and cartels.

i. Seek appropriations to hire an additional 10,000 ICE officers.

ii. Seek appropriations to hire an additional 300 Federal prosecutors to support Federal immigration prosecution efforts.

iii. Reforms to help expedite the responsible addition of new ICE personnel.

E. **Detention Authority.** Various laws and judicial rulings have eroded ICE's ability to detain illegal immigrants (including criminal aliens), such that criminal aliens are released from ICE custody into our

communities. Therefore, the Administration proposes terminating outdated catch-and-release laws that make it difficult to remove illegal immigrants.

i. Ensure public safety and national security by providing a legislative fix for the *Zadvydas* loophole, and authorizing ICE, consistent with the Constitution, to retain custody of illegal aliens whose home countries will not accept their repatriation.

ii. Require the detention of an alien: (1) who was not inspected and admitted into the United States, who holds a revoked nonimmigrant visa (or other nonimmigrant admission document), or who is deportable for failing to maintain nonimmigrant status; and (2) who has been charged in the United States with a crime that resulted in the death or serious bodily injury of another person.

F. ***Legal Workforce.*** Immigrants who come here illegally and enter the workforce undermine job opportunities and reduce wages for American workers, as does the abuse of visa programs. Therefore, the Administration increasing employment verification and other protections for U.S. workers.

i. Require the use of the electronic status-verification system (“E-Verify”) to ensure the maintenance of a legal workforce in the United States.

ii. Preempt any State or local law relating to employment of unauthorized aliens.

iii. Impose strong penalties, including debarment of Federal contractors, for failure to comply with E-Verify.

iv. Increase penalties for any person or entity engaging in a pattern or practice of violations.

v. Require the Social Security Administration to disclose information to DHS to be used in the enforcement of immigration laws.

vi. Expand the definition of unlawful employment discrimination to include replacement of U.S. citizen workers by nonimmigrant workers or the preferential hiring of such foreign workers over U.S. citizen workers.

vii. Strengthen laws prohibiting document fraud related to employment or to any other immigration benefit.

G. ***Deportable Aliens.*** The categories of aliens that currently qualify for deportation are insufficiently broad to remove aliens who pose a threat to the security of the American public. Therefore, the

Administration proposes expanding and clarifying the type of aliens who present a danger to Americans and should therefore be removable on an expedited basis.

- i. Expand grounds of deportability to explicitly include gang members.
- ii. Expand the grounds of deportability to include those convicted of multiple drunk driving offenses or a single offense involving death or serious injury.
- iii. Expand the grounds of deportability to include those who fail to register as a sex offender.
- iv. Clarify the technical definition of “aggravated felony” by referring to “an offense relating to” each of the categories of crimes, rather than specifying the crimes themselves. This will ensure certain kinds of homicide, sex offenses, and trafficking offenses are encompassed within the statutory definition.

H. ***Gang Members.*** Today, known gang members are still able to win immigration benefits despite the dangers they pose to American society. As such, the Administration proposes implementing measures that would deny gang members and those associated with criminal gangs from receiving immigration benefits.

I. ***Visa Security Improvements.*** Without sufficient resources, the State Department is hindered from adequately vetting visa applicants. As such, the Administration proposes enhancing State Department visa and traveler security resources and authorities.

- i. Expand the Department of State’s authority to use fraud prevention and detection fees for programs and activities to combat all classes of visa fraud within the United States and abroad.
- ii. Ensure funding for the Visa Security Program and facilitate its expansion to all high-risk posts.
- iii. Increase the border crossing card fee.
- iv. Grant the Department of State authority to apply the Passport Security Surcharge to the costs of protecting U.S. citizens and their interests overseas, and to include those costs when adjusting the surcharge.

v. Strengthen laws prohibiting civil and criminal immigration fraud and encourage the use of advanced analytics to proactively detect fraud in immigration benefit applications.

3. *MERIT-BASED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM*

A. *Merit-Based Immigration.* The current immigration system prioritizes extended family-based chain migration over skills-based immigration and does not serve the national interest. Decades of low-skilled immigration has suppressed wages, fueled unemployment and strained federal resources. Therefore, the Administration proposes establishing a merit-based immigration system that protects U.S. workers and taxpayers, and ending chain migration, to promote financial success and assimilation for newcomers.

i. End extended-family chain migration by limiting family-based green cards to spouses and minor children and replace it with a merit-based system that prioritizes skills and economic contributions over family connections.

ii. Establish a new, points-based system for the awarding of Green Cards (lawful permanent residents) based on factors that allow individuals to successfully assimilate and support themselves financially.

iii. Eliminate the “Diversity Visa Lottery.”

iv. Limit the number of refugees to prevent abuse of the generous U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and allow for effective assimilation of admitted refugees into the fabric of our society.

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