



NYSAC

— NEW YORK STATE —
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES



NYSAC President: Hon. Daniel P. McCoy, Albany County | NYSCEA President: Hon. Steven M. Neuhaus, Orange County

Executive Director: Stephen J. Acquario, Esq.

April 9, 2024

Hon. Joseph Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to urgently call for action to address the migrant crisis that continues to unfold at the southern border of the United States. Having recently visited the area, our delegation of New York County Executives has seen firsthand the challenges faced by both border communities in Texas and the communities across our nation, including those in New York, where migrants are being transported.

Our delegation met with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officers and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Agents and saw and heard accounts of drug and human smuggling, gaps in physical border barriers, the nightly dangers of the “war zone” of illegal crossings, the unknown number of individuals who escape capture every day and night, the lack of modern technology and equipment, and the Sisyphean efforts of USBP to protect our border communities.

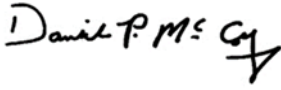
We stand in support of our hardworking CBP and USBP officials, local governments and community organizations addressing the current migrant crisis, and we respectively call on you to work with your colleagues in Washington to resolve the following challenges that we feel strongly require immediate attention.

1. Secure the border by using every emergency power at your disposal to immediately prevent, or drastically reduce, any further flow of individuals from crossing the U.S. Border. The situation is dire. For example, we were informed by USBP that approximately 34,000 unaccounted for migrants have crossed in one area of the New Mexico/Mexican Border since October. Their current whereabouts and countries of origin are completely unknown, which is a major national security risk. At that same site, USBP advised us that we must leave by dusk as the border is controlled by cartels after dark, which accounts for why this area is so porous. FBI Director Chris Wray himself testified to Congress saying, "We are seeing a wide array of very dangerous threats that emanate from the border," he said, citing drug trafficking in particular. "The FBI alone seized enough fentanyl in the last two years to kill 270 million people." He also mentioned “some of the overseas facilitators of the smuggling network have ISIS ties that we're very concerned about.”

2. Legislation must be passed to increase USBP staffing levels to prevent unauthorized entries, invest in technology (they still use old black and white cameras on the border), increase the number of immigration judges to process cases quicker and locate a specialized unit on the southern border to expedite hearings using retired federal judges or magistrates and law clerks and retired AUSA's, make needed changes to the asylum process, and provide the funding necessary to better tackle the problem.
3. While significant resources are being allocated to manage the influx of migrants, there is room for improvement in terms of infrastructure and coordination with contractors to ensure the humane treatment of individuals.
4. Overcoming the lack of communication and coordination among federal agencies regarding vital information such as background checks and healthcare must be a top priority. It is imperative that systems are implemented to ensure seamless sharing of information to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of processing migrants.
5. Enacted legislation must comprehensively address immigration issues on both the northern and southern borders. CBP, USBP, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) require increased funding for staffing, infrastructure, transportation, and improved technology to address the broken immigration processing system effectively.
6. USBP must prioritize putting "badges on the border" rather than behind computers. Contract agencies can be better utilized for administrative work, both at hardening centers and customs processing centers, to allow USBP to focus on securing the border.
7. It is crucial to improve the security of the border and increase pathways for legal entry into the United States. CBP must increase the availability of spots for the CBP One mobile app, which currently hinders legal entry and prevent migrants from accessing legal employment. Additionally, asylum seekers must have a shorter waiting period before they receive work authorization, which will help local economies by placing migrants in hard to fill jobs in industries still reeling from the pandemic (restaurant, other hospitality).
8. If the United States' policy is going to allow thousands of migrants a day to enter the country, then more resources must be provided to USCIS and DOJ's Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) to reduce asylum seeker application backlogs, and there must be consistent processing and detention procedures across the United States. The current wait time of five years for hearings is unacceptable and contributes to the backlog of cases.
9. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and CBP Shelter and Services Program (SSP) must allow all counties in the State of New York who are experiencing migrant influxes to apply for funding through the program. SSP funding would help NY localities provide supportive services, such as housing, to vulnerable migrants.
10. Finally, it is evident that the current immigration system is failing to effectively deter illegal entry into the United States. Without consequences for illegal entry, the flow of migrants will not stop. Policies must be implemented to ensure that consequences are enforced consistently and uniformly across both our southern and northern borders.

In conclusion, we urge you to prioritize addressing the migrant crisis and implementing comprehensive reforms to our immigration system. The well-being of our communities, the dignity of migrants, and the bedrock ideals of the United States of America depend on swift and decisive action.

Sincerely,



Hon. Daniel P. McCoy
NYSAC President



Hon. Steven M. Neuhaus
NYSCEA President

cc: Senate Leadership
House Leadership
New York Congressional Delegation
New York City Mayor, Hon. Eric Adams
New York State Governor, Hon. Kathy Hochul

The New York County Executives' Association is an affiliate of the New York State Association of Counties.

NYSAC has remained committed to counties since 1925

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