

THE MESOCRATIC PARTY | POLICY WHITE PAPER

Secure and Streamlined

A Border Security and Legal Immigration Framework That Actually Works

Secure the border. Fix the system. Stop using people as props.

Published by the Mesocratic National Committee February 2026

Paid for by the Mesocratic National Committee. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1. The Problem: A System Designed to Fail

- 1.1 The Scale
- 1.2 The Legal Immigration Backlog
- 1.3 The Border
- 1.4 The False Choice

2. The Data: What Immigration Actually Looks Like

- 2.1 Who Is Here
- 2.2 How They Got Here
- 2.3 What They Contribute
- 2.4 What the System Costs

3. The Proposal: Enforcement and Reform Simultaneously

- 3.1 Border Security: Technology, Personnel, and Barriers
- 3.2 Mandatory E-Verify
- 3.3 Legal Immigration Modernization
- 3.4 Immigration Judge Surge
- 3.5 Earned Legal Status
- 3.6 Dreamer Citizenship Path
- 3.7 Zero Tolerance for Violent Criminals

4. The Math

5. Who Benefits — And the Trade-Offs

6. Implementation Timeline

7. How the Parties Compare on Immigration

8. Conclusion

Sources and References

Executive Summary

The United States has approximately 14 million unauthorized immigrants — a record high reached in 2023. The legal immigration system has a backlog of over 11 million pending applications, with some employment-based applicants facing projected wait times exceeding 50 years. The asylum court backlog has grown to years-long delays. USCIS faces its largest backlog in history.

Meanwhile, visa overstays — not border crossings — have been the larger source of growth in the unauthorized population for over a decade. The employers who hire unauthorized workers face minimal consequences. And the legal immigration system is so broken that following the rules is often harder than breaking them.

Neither party has a serious solution because neither party addresses both sides of the problem simultaneously. Enforcement without legal reform is a wall with no door. Legal reform without enforcement is a door with no lock. You need both.

The Mesocratic Party proposes:

- **Technology-driven border security:** Sensors, drones, surveillance systems, and physical barriers where terrain warrants them — plus a surge in Border Patrol personnel.
- **Mandatory E-Verify for all employers.** If you can't get hired without legal status, the primary economic incentive for unauthorized immigration disappears.
- **Legal immigration modernization.** Clear the backlog. Expand work visas to meet labor market demand. Create a merit-based track alongside the existing family-based system. Reduce processing times from years to months.
- **Immigration judge surge.** Double the number of immigration judges to clear the asylum backlog.
- **Earned legal status** for long-term unauthorized residents (5+ years, no serious criminal record) — pay a penalty, pay back taxes, pass a background check, get in line.
- **Dreamer citizenship path.** People brought here as children who have grown up American in every way except paperwork deserve a permanent solution.
- **Zero tolerance for violent criminals.** Expedited removal for anyone convicted of a violent felony.

This is not amnesty. It is a deal: enforcement that works in exchange for a legal system that works. Neither side gets everything it wants. Everyone gets a system that functions.

1. The Problem: A System Designed to Fail

1.1 The Scale

As of 2023, approximately 14 million unauthorized immigrants were living in the United States, according to Pew Research Center — the highest number on record. This represents a growth of 3.5 million between 2021 and 2023, the largest two-year increase in over three decades.

Approximately 9.7 million unauthorized immigrants were in the U.S. workforce in 2023. As of 2024, roughly 40% had some form of temporary protection from deportation. Two-thirds of unauthorized adult immigrants had lived in the U.S. for at least a decade as of 2016. The median length of residence was 13.6 years.

This is not a population that arrived yesterday. Many have been here for decades, have U.S.-citizen children, pay taxes, and are woven into the fabric of their communities. Any serious policy must reckon with this reality.

1.2 The Legal Immigration Backlog

The legal immigration system is broken by design. The U.S. caps employment-based green cards at 140,000 per year, with per-country limits of 7%. This creates absurd backlogs: Indian-born applicants in the EB-3 category face projected wait times exceeding 50 years.

USCIS faces a record 11.3 million pending applications — the largest immigration backlog in its history. The employment-based green card backlog includes more than 1.2 million people (including dependents). Processing times for basic applications stretch months or years.

The system punishes people who follow the rules. A skilled engineer from India who does everything right — employer sponsorship, labor certification, petition approval — may wait decades for a green card. Meanwhile, their children risk “aging out” of dependent status at 21, potentially losing their legal status entirely.

1.3 The Border

Border encounters surged to record levels in 2022 and 2023, driven by economic recovery in the U.S., economic turmoil in Latin America, and political displacement from Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Encounters declined significantly in 2024 following policy changes and increased Mexican enforcement.

But the border is only part of the story. Between 2007 and 2018, visa overstays accounted for a larger share of growth in the unauthorized population than illegal border crossings. The fixation on the physical border — while politically potent — misses the larger systemic dysfunction.

1.4 The False Choice

Republicans propose enforcement without reform: build a wall, increase deportations, reduce legal immigration. This approach has been tried repeatedly and has never solved the problem because it does not address the economic incentives driving unauthorized immigration or the broken legal system that makes legal entry nearly impossible for many.

Democrats propose reform without enforcement: pathway to citizenship, expanded asylum, reduced enforcement. This approach lacks credibility on border security and fails to address the legitimate concerns of communities affected by rapid, uncontrolled immigration.

The Mesocratic position: both simultaneously. Enforce the border and the workplace. Fix the legal system so people have a viable legal path. Provide a resolution for the long-term unauthorized population that is neither amnesty nor mass deportation — because neither is achievable or desirable.

2. The Data: What Immigration Actually Looks Like

2.1 Who Is Here

The unauthorized immigrant population is not what most political rhetoric suggests:

- **Long-term residents:** Two-thirds of unauthorized adults have lived in the U.S. for a decade or more.
- **Workforce participants:** 9.7 million were in the labor force in 2023.
- **Parents of U.S. citizens:** Over 1.2 million have U.S.-citizen spouses; millions more have U.S.-citizen children.
- **Country of origin:** As of 2022, 37% were from Mexico (the smallest share on record), with growing numbers from Central America, South America, and Asia.
- **Childhood arrivals:** Nearly 4.8 million undocumented and temporarily protected youth and young adults live in legal limbo.

2.2 How They Got Here

The popular image of unauthorized immigration is someone crossing the southern border. The reality is more complex:

- **Visa overstays** have been the larger source of growth in the unauthorized population since at least 2007.
- **Border crossings** surged during 2021-2023 but had declined dramatically from their early-2000s peak before the pandemic era.
- **Asylum seekers** represent a significant portion of recent arrivals — people presenting themselves at ports of entry or to Border Patrol, not sneaking across.

2.3 What They Contribute

The National Academies of Sciences found that immigration has an overall positive fiscal impact over the long run — across the lifetimes of immigrants, their children, and grandchildren. Immigrants start businesses at higher rates than native-born Americans, fill critical labor shortages in agriculture, construction, healthcare, and service industries, and pay billions in taxes — including Social Security and Medicare taxes that many will never collect.

This is not an argument for open borders. It is an argument against the fantasy that the U.S. economy would be better off without immigrant labor.

2.4 What the System Costs

The current system is expensive precisely because it does not work:

- Immigration court backlogs cost billions in prolonged detention and repeated hearings.
- Unauthorized workers in the shadow economy reduce tax revenue compared to legalized workers.
- Enforcement-only approaches require massive spending on detention, deportation, and border infrastructure without addressing root causes.

The CBO estimated that comprehensive immigration reform — combining enforcement with legalization — would reduce federal deficits over two decades.

3. The Proposal: Enforcement and Reform Simultaneously

3.1 Border Security: Technology, Personnel, and Barriers

The Mesocratic border security plan prioritizes effectiveness over symbolism:

- **Technology:** Sensor arrays, surveillance drones, ground-penetrating radar, AI-powered monitoring systems, and integrated camera networks across the entire southern border. Technology covers more ground more effectively than physical barriers alone.
- **Personnel:** Increase Border Patrol staffing to levels that allow full coverage. Invest in training, equipment, and retention.
- **Barriers where effective:** Physical barriers make sense in urban areas and high-traffic corridors. They make less sense across hundreds of miles of remote desert and mountain terrain where technology is more cost-effective.
- **Ports of entry:** Modernize and staff ports of entry to handle increased legal traffic and reduce incentives for illegal crossing.

3.2 Mandatory E-Verify

If unauthorized immigrants cannot get jobs, the primary economic incentive for unauthorized immigration disappears. E-Verify — the electronic employment verification system — should be mandatory for all employers, with:

- Phase-in over 2 years (large employers first, then small businesses).
- Penalties for non-compliance that make hiring unauthorized workers more expensive than hiring legal workers.
- System improvements to reduce false positives and ensure legal workers are not wrongly flagged.

This is the single most effective enforcement tool available — and it is consistently opposed by business interests in both parties because it works.

3.3 Legal Immigration Modernization

- **Clear the backlog:** Recapture unused green cards from prior years. Increase annual green card caps. Reform per-country limits to reduce wait times from decades to years.
- **Expand work visas:** Create new visa categories tied to demonstrated labor market demand. Allow visa holders to change employers without losing status.
- **Merit-based track:** Add a points-based immigration pathway alongside the existing family-based system — not replacing it. Skills, education, language proficiency, and labor market demand determine eligibility.
- **Processing speed:** Set processing time standards: 6 months for routine applications, 12 months for complex cases. Staff USCIS accordingly.

3.4 Immigration Judge Surge

The asylum system is overwhelmed because there are not enough judges. Double the number of immigration judges (currently ~600) over 4 years. Establish processing timelines: initial hearings within 60 days, final decisions within 180 days.

3.5 Earned Legal Status

For unauthorized immigrants who have been in the U.S. for 5 or more years with no serious criminal record:

- Pay a civil penalty.
- Pay any back taxes owed.
- Pass a comprehensive background check.
- Demonstrate English proficiency or enrollment in English classes.
- Receive renewable legal status with work authorization.
- Pathway to permanent residency after additional waiting period — at the back of the line behind current legal applicants.

This is not amnesty. There is a penalty. There is a process. There is a wait. But it is a resolution — something neither party has delivered in decades.

3.6 Dreamer Citizenship Path

For individuals brought to the U.S. as children (before age 16) who have lived here for at least 5 years: a direct path to citizenship upon completion of education, military service, or sustained employment, plus a background check. These are Americans in every way that matters. The law should reflect that reality.

3.7 Zero Tolerance for Violent Criminals

Unauthorized immigrants convicted of violent felonies face expedited removal proceedings. No exceptions. No delays. This is non-negotiable.

4. The Math

Component	Estimated Annual Cost
Border technology and personnel	\$8-12 billion
E-Verify expansion and enforcement	\$1-2 billion
Immigration judge surge (doubling)	\$1-2 billion
USCIS staffing for backlog clearance	\$2-3 billion
Total annual investment	\$12-19 billion

Offsets and savings:

Source	Estimated Annual Value
Increased tax revenue from legalization	\$4-8 billion
Reduced detention/processing costs	\$2-4 billion
Economic growth from expanded legal immigration	\$5-15 billion (GDP impact)
Net fiscal impact over 10 years	Deficit reduction

The CBO's analysis of comprehensive immigration reform consistently shows net deficit reduction over a 20-year window. The current broken system is more expensive than fixing it.

5. Who Benefits — And the Trade-Offs

Who benefits:

- **Border communities** get real security based on technology and staffing, not political theater.
- **Employers** get a legal workforce and a system for verifying eligibility.

- **Legal immigration applicants** get a system that actually processes their cases.
- **Long-term unauthorized residents** get a path out of the shadows.
- **Dreamers** get permanent legal status.
- **Taxpayers** get a system that generates more revenue than it costs.

The trade-offs:

- **Some unauthorized immigrants will not qualify** for earned legal status (recent arrivals, those with criminal records). Enforcement applies to them.
- **Some employers will face higher labor costs** when they can no longer hire unauthorized workers below market rates.
- **Political compromise is required.** Neither side gets a pure victory. That is the point.

6. Implementation Timeline

Phase 1 (Year 1-2): Enforcement Foundation - Deploy border technology systems. - Begin E-Verify mandate (large employers). - Start immigration judge hiring and training. - Begin USCIS backlog clearance.

Phase 2 (Year 2-3): Legal System Modernization - E-Verify mandate extends to all employers. - Green card cap increases and per-country reform take effect. - New work visa categories operational. - Processing time standards enforced.

Phase 3 (Year 3-5): Earned Legal Status - Earned legal status program opens for applications. - Dreamer citizenship path established. - Full system operational with ongoing enforcement.

7. How the Parties Compare on Immigration

	Republican	Mesocratic	Democrat
Border security	Wall + enforcement	Technology + personnel + barriers	Reduced emphasis
Legal immigration	Reduce	Expand + modernize	Expand
E-Verify	Support in theory	Mandatory (all employers)	Mixed
Undocumented population	Mass deportation	Earned legal status	Pathway to citizenship
Dreamers	No path	Citizenship path	Citizenship path
Asylum	Restrict	Streamline (judge surge)	Expand
Labor market	Reduce immigration	Match visas to demand	Expand broadly
Criminal enforcement	Aggressive	Zero tolerance (violent	Due process

Republican	Mesocratic felons)	Democrat emphasis
------------	-----------------------	----------------------

The Mesocratic position is unique because it pairs enforcement with reform as a package deal — neither side gets its half without delivering the other.

8. Conclusion

The American immigration system is broken. Everyone knows it. No one fixes it because both parties prefer a broken system they can campaign on to a working system they’d have to share credit for.

Fourteen million people live in the shadows. Over a million qualified immigrants wait decades for green cards. The border alternates between overwhelmed and politicized. Employers hire unauthorized workers with impunity. And every two years, politicians on both sides give speeches about immigration while doing nothing to actually solve the problem.

The Mesocratic position is a deal: enforce the border with technology and mandatory E-Verify. Fix the legal system so following the rules is faster than breaking them. Give long-term unauthorized residents a way out of the shadows — with penalties, requirements, and accountability. Protect Dreamers permanently. Remove violent criminals immediately. And stop using human beings as political props.

This is what a functional immigration system looks like. It requires compromise. It requires both enforcement and reform. And it requires political leaders willing to solve a problem instead of exploiting one.

Sources and References

- Pew Research Center. “U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population Reached a Record 14 Million in 2023.” August 2025.
- Migration Policy Institute. Unauthorized Immigrant Population Profiles. Various years.
- Center for Migration Studies. Undocumented Population Estimates. 2024-2025.
- FWD.us. “Understanding the Undocumented Immigrant Population.” 2024.
- FWD.us. “Green Card Recapture” and “Per-Country Cap Reform.” Various.
- USCIS. Immigration and Citizenship Data. Various.
- Niskanen Center. “Legal Immigration in Numbers.” January 2026.
- Congressional Budget Office. Immigration reform fiscal impact analyses. Various years.
- National Academies of Sciences. “The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration.” 2017.
- Economic Policy Institute. “Unauthorized Immigrants and the Economy.” 2024.

- CBP. Border encounter data. Various.
- Department of Homeland Security. Unauthorized immigrant population estimates. 2024.
- GAO. Immigration court backlog analyses.

This document is published by the Mesocratic National Committee and is available for public download at mesocrats.org/platform/immigration.

Paid for by the Mesocratic National Committee. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

© 2026 Mesocratic National Committee. All rights reserved.