

Presidents & Immigration Policy

Legislation Enacted During Their Term/Viewpoint



Reagan 1981-1989

- Used 'Make America Great Again' phrase, but in reference to embracing immigrants contributions to the country
- Executive Order 12324—Interdiction of Illegal Aliens
- Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986: toughened border control, but offered asylum to those who entered before 1982

George Bush 1989-1993

- Immigration Act of 1990 - which had a family unity provision
- Treated immigrants similarly to Reagan, wanted to enforce legislation but also welcomed legal immigrants

"If they're living here, I don't want to see 6- and 8-year-old kids being made totally uneducated and made to feel like they're living totally outside the law," Bush said. "These are good people, strong people." -1980

Bill Clinton 1993-2001

- Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act - 1996: increased penalties on immigrants (who violated either immigration law or other crimes)
- Increased the budget to combat illegal immigration

"We are a nation of immigrants. But we are also a nation of laws. It is wrong and ultimately self-defeating for a nation of immigrants to permit the kind of abuse of our immigration laws we have seen in recent years, and we must do more to stop it."

-- President Clinton

1995 State of the Union

George W Bush 2001-2009

- 'Compassionate conservative' platform, he wanted people to move more easily back & forth across the border for work but also wanted tighter border control
- They are a part of American life but they are beyond the reach and protection of American law.

'We are a nation of laws, and we must enforce our laws. We're also a nation of immigrants, and we must uphold that tradition, which has strengthened our country in so many ways. These are not contradictory goals. America can be a lawful society and a welcoming society at the same time. We will fix the problems created by illegal immigration, and we will deliver a system that is secure, orderly, and fair.'

Barack Obama 2009-2017

- Created DACA (Dream Act)
- Concentrated on deporting undocumented immigrants w/ criminal records
- removed millions of undocumented immigrants, the most of any president thus far (partially due to the way deportation was defined)

Donald Trump 2017-

- Ran on anti-immigrant rhetoric & has continued such speech
- Repealed DACA
- Wants to end birthright citizenship
- In favor of stricter regulations for naturalization