**Immigration in the United States**

**Committee Description**:

This senate debate will focus on legislation legislation outlining the policies for:

- migrant detention

-qualifications for legal migration

- asylum requests

- the feasibility & efficiency of legal immigration processing

- migrant seizures & deportation

-the rights of the undocumented, including their status and pathways to documentation (such as Deferred Acton for Childhood Arrivals or DACA)

-action plans for children of the deported or detained

-border security

**The Issue:**

The growing influence and prosperity of the United States, over the course of the last century and its transition into the current one, has attracted a massive influx of foreign individuals from all over the world to seek American residency and citizenship. As more and more people have immigrated to the United States, disputes among politicians have risen amid growing concerns about border security, the extent of immigration, among others. All of these concerns are one of two sides of the dispute:

1. The enforcement of current immigration laws.
2. The management of undocumented immigrants who are already residing within United States territory.

Congress, along with the rest of the United States government, has been unable to come to a conclusive agreement on either area of the dispute. Delegates will be challenged to recognize and work around the complexity of the debate on immigration.

**Past Action on Immigration:**

Actions that have been taken against the issue of immigration are numerous and extremely variable. In 1965, The Immigration and Nationality Act transformed American immigration policy by halting past legislation that set regulations on the ethnic and racial make-up of incoming immigrants. As a result of this legislation, many Asian immigrants enter the United States.

Later on in a more lenient period, President Ronald Reagan ratified the Simpson-Mazzoli Act that grants amnesty to more than 3 million undocumented immigrants living within the United States. This action comes to satisfy the political agendas of many politicians across the government, but also serves to provoke protest among many members of Congress.

In accordance with the spotlight that Reagan inadvertently placed on immigration law enforcement, the topic of the handling of undocumented immigrants comes into view. In 2001, U.S. Senators Orrin Hatch and Dick Durbin propose the Relief and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which outlined a route towards legal status for undocumented immigrants brought into the United States as children. Because of the then recent fuel that Reagan added into the fire with his amnesty act, the DREAM act fails to pass and be ratified. The partisanship of this particular dispute draws a deeper line between conservative and liberal America. Later on in 2012, President Obama signs into affect the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) legislation that legally shields dreamers from deportation, but fails to provide a path to citizenship.

In a radical jump from a liberal administration to a conservative one, billionaire Donald Trump is sworn in as President of the United States in December 2016. As per the focus of his campaign, President Donald Trump takes immediate action on immigration. In 2017 Trump implements two executive orders that prohibit immigration from six predominantly Muslim countries. Trump revokes DACA. His new policy allows current recipients to renew their DACA status, but prevents new recipients from entering into DACA protection. Trump writes an executive order calling for an immediate expansion of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), an immediate construction of more detention centers, and the further construction of s US-Mexico border wall. Among tweets and media releases, chaos ensues. The treatment of individuals in migrant detention centers also becomes a major concern, producing various legislative proposals.

From Senator Cory Booker’s Dignity for Detained Migrants Act to limit detainment, to Ted Cruz’s proposal to ramp up the amount of immigration judges and temporary migrant shelters, the issue of immigration has only gotten more and more complex.

Under President Biden, record numbers of apprehensions have occurred at the US Mexico border, with close to 200,000 arrests in some months. Many of those attempting to cross illegally are unaccompanied minors.

President Biden has laid out the following policy goals in the [US Citizenship Act.](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/20/fact-sheet-president-biden-sends-immigration-bill-to-congress-as-part-of-his-commitment-to-modernize-our-immigration-system/)  However, passage of this legislation through the US Senate requires 60 votes, which has not yet been accomplished.

* Create an earned roadmap to citizenship for undocumented individuals.
* Keep families together.
* Embrace diversity.
* Promote immigrant and refugee integration and citizenship.
* Grow our economy.
* Protect workers from exploitation and improve the employment verification process.
* Supplement existing border resources with technology and infrastructure.
* Manage the border and protect border communities.
* Crack down on criminal organizations.
* Start from the source ($4 billion aid plan to Central American countries)
* Improve the immigration courts and protect vulnerable individuals.
* Support asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations.

**Possible Solutions:**

Many proposals to solve the immigration dispute have failed to cater to both opposing sides of the argument. Some possible solutions could be:

* A compromise where a US-Mexico border wall is constructed and in return DACA comes back into full effect, detention center conditions improve, and immigration courts become more efficient.
* A policy where United States immigration policy more thoroughly evaluates immigrants, but also processes their immigration applications more efficiently.
* A policy where a thorough deportation of legal/illegal immigrants that have not been law-abiding is carried out and in return undocumented immigrants that have been living lawfully are provided with a pathway to citizenship.

**Questions to consider:**

* Is my determined senator open to compromise?
* What trade offs can conservative and liberal senators make to solve the issue?
* What are your senator’s justifications behind their idea regarding legislation about immigration?
* How does your senator’s opinions translate into immigration legislation and policy?
* How does immigration affect the United States economy and how does that relate to your senator’s views on immigration?

**Possible voting blocs:**

* Strongly conservative senators not very open to compromise.
* Conservative and Liberal senators open to compromise.
* Strongly liberal senators not very open to compromise.
* Senators near the border with Mexico

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