



# LEWIS CENTER TOPIC BRIEFS



## Managing Migration in 2023

Migration is a worldwide phenomenon caused by economic hardship, war and political violence, narcotics and the criminal cartels, a pandemic, drought and floods and other natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes.

From Central Africa to the Middle East, Syria to Afghanistan, a migrant wave pushes toward Europe. Negative reaction to that has been formidable. Pope Francis' first trip outside the Vatican in 2014 was to the Italian islands where he saw the suffering of migrants. The Pope condemned the "globalization of indifference" toward migrant desperation and death. In this year a new resurgence of migrants have made their way across the Mediterranean toward Europe. Many have drowned on the way.

People of the Western Hemisphere are also on the move. Migrants come from Cuba, that poorly governed island, strangled by the pandemic and U.S. sanctions. They come from the lands of repression, Nicaragua and Venezuela, and from countries with devastating poverty – Haiti, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. The result is the "push" factor surging migrants to the U.S. border. The "pull" factor in migration is strong as well. It is the U.S. economy, in great need of workers both

basic and skilled, holding promise for desperate people looking for a better life.

What to do? Most important would be legislation along the lines of McCain/Kennedy. That bipartisan immigration reform legislation was proposed in 2005/2007, and it had the support of President Bush as well as Democratic leadership. It would have legalized the status of millions living long-term in the U.S. It would have had a "Dream Act" provision for those brought to the U.S. as children. DACA is that program today, but it is limited and not codified in law. Under McCain/Kennedy workers would have been contracted for up to 2 years, returning home afterwards. It would have met some needs of U.S. employers and reduced the workers' need to leave their country on a permanent basis. Finally, border enforcement would have been augmented with more border patrol officers and with use of the latest technological means to detect illegal crossings. The proposed law came close but failed to pass the crucial Senate vote.

So, here we are. No matter the heated political rhetoric and the executive action of Presidents, only Congress can fix the crisis. The Biden administration is implementing some changes that the President can

do on his own. The U.S. will admit from Haiti, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela tens of thousands under certain conditions, like having a sponsor in the U.S. Illegal crossing would render such persons ineligible. The Venezuelan program, started in October, has resulted in a drastic drop in illegal border crossings. That is promising.

Cooperation with Mexico is essential to make the initiatives work. Mexico has agreed to take up to 30,000 per month of those migrants expelled by the U.S. The four-country program noted above and other measures including use of “aps” to get asylum appointments have at least temporarily reduced illegal border crossings by significant amounts. Other important actions to reduce the problem at the border include major increases in asylum officers and immigration judges. The officers can determine at the border if the person has a credible fear of returning and a decision can be made about referral or not to a judge.

Mexican President Lopez Obrador and President Biden agreed in a January 7, 2023, meeting that “root

causes” of desperate migration must be addressed. Those causes have been increasing over time. Back in 1998 after a devastating Category 5 hurricane, I accompanied visiting President George H.W. Bush to a meeting with President Flores of Honduras. Flores asked Bush if he remembered the Haitian and Cuban “boat people” who spilled over the coast of Florida in great numbers. Of course President Bush said he did. Well, President Flores replied, if there were no effective aid and development funds from the U.S. and other donors, then Honduran “feet people” would march up to Texas. In fact, that has happened.

Well-funded and effectively focused U.S. aid to promote security and economic development can have a positive effect and reduce the “push” factors in migration. Expanded trade with Central America is mutually beneficial as well. Congress may be in a mood to cut funding and development aid this year, but now is the time to act along updated lines of the McCain/Kennedy bills. It is fifteen years late, but still important and it is in our national interest.

## About the Author



**Dr. James Creagan** is Professor of Political Science, Ambassador in Residence, and fellow of the Lewis Center of the Americas at the University of the Incarnate Word. He holds an AB from the University of Notre Dame and PhD from the University of Virginia. Ambassador Creagan was an American Diplomat and Foreign Service Officer for 35 years. He served in many European and Latin American countries, including Mexico, El Salvador, Peru, Brazil, Portugal, Bolivia and Italy. He was the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras and the Deputy Ambassador to Italy and the Holy See. He is also President Emeritus of John Cabot University in Rome, Italy.

## More Information

*Below is a list of selected research and opinion sources from various organizations that focus on matters of immigration and human displacement:*

International Organization for Migration (IOM) <https://www.iom.int/>

Migration Policy Institute <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/>

Federation for American Immigration Reform <https://www.fairus.org/>

*continued on page 3*

America: The Jesuit Review publishes regularly on the topic of immigration <https://www.americamagazine.org/topic/immigration>

American Civil Liberties Union, section on Immigrants' Rights <https://www.aclu.org/issues/immigrants-rights>

Bipartisan Policy Center's This Week in Immigration Podcast Series <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/podcast/this-week-in-immigration/>

Franciscans for Justice website, section on immigration includes articles, action alerts & other resources <https://www.franciscansforjustice.org/category/immigration/>

Federal Government of México – Dirección de Estadística [http://www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Direccion\\_de\\_Estadistica](http://www.politicamigratoria.gob.mx/es/PoliticaMigratoria/Direccion_de_Estadistica)

Harvard Immigration and Democracy Podcast Series <https://immigrationinitiative.harvard.edu/podcasts/>

National Immigration Forum <https://immigrationforum.org/>

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights <https://nnirr.org/>

U.S. Census Bureau website, section on Migration/Geographic Mobility <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/migration.html>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security website, section on Immigration Data and Statistics <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics>

Vatican website section on Migrants and Refugees

(English) <https://migrants-refugees.va/>

(Spanish) <https://migrants-refugees.va/es/>