



TELL PA LEGISLATORS: STOP THE HATE!

Immigration policy has been one of the most divisive issues in this year's political conversation. The current President came into office after campaigning on a virulently anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and racist platform. Many state legislators have followed this lead, introducing a range of anti-immigrant bills and publicly demonizing immigrant and refugee communities.

Now is the time to tell our elected representatives to #StoptheHate!

PICC and our member organizations are committed to pushing back against this hate-filled agenda and lifting up the voices of immigrants and refugees in PA by supporting community-led campaigns and initiatives.

We need your help! Allies and supporters are needed to amplify the voices and campaigns of immigrant and refugee communities and show legislators that their anti-immigrant policies harm all Pennsylvanians.

What is Our Goal?

- Make supporting anti-immigrant legislation a political liability
- Lift up a positive message demanding that elected representatives actively support immigrant and refugee communities

What Can You Do?

- Contact Your Legislator! The most important way you can make an impact is by contacting your legislator via phone, letter, and visiting their office.
- Write a Letter to the Editor or Op Ed in your local paper.
- Support your local community based organization by showing up to local events and donating.

Who Should You Call and Visit?

- Always start by contacting your State House Representative and State Senator.
- Legislators on the attached Priority List. PICC and the ACLU have put together this "priority list" of state legislators based on their past votes and districts that they represent.
- Committee Members. As these bills move through the House and Senate, it is important to look at what committee each bill is in and contact the committee members to encourage them to vote NO.

What Do You Say?

- Use the attached Messaging Framework for guidance on what to say when talking to legislators.
- See PICC's many 1-page issue handouts for detailed talking points

REMEMBER: You can find your representatives, information about all legislators, and the status of individual bills on the Pennsylvania General Assembly website: www.legis.state.pa.us.

MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

This year, the issue of “Sanctuary Cities” has become a focus at both the federal and state level, with policies introduced that would punish jurisdictions that have policies limiting how local law enforcement interacts with federal immigration enforcement (ICE).

Based on the experience by PICC and our member organizations from years of advocating against harmful anti-immigrant legislation, we have put together a messaging framework to push back against the entire slate of anti-immigrant bills that have been introduced, with a particular focus on those targeting cities and counties with “sanctuary” policies. Which messaging point you use will depend on your local legislator and what they are likely to find persuasive. Please use the 1-page issue handouts for detailed talking points.

1) Which Side Are You On? Will you support policies that uphold Pennsylvanian’s values of being diverse and inclusive of immigrants and refugees OR Will you follow Trump and support policies based on hatred and bigotry?

2) Anti- “Sanctuary” bills are contrary to constitutional principles and rule of law. Most of the policies targeted by anti-“sanctuary” bills simply require local law enforcement to respect constitutional requirements when detaining people. Forcing local law enforcement to act as an extension of ICE and hold people regardless of constitutional requirements is contrary to these principles. Municipalities should be able to make independent judgments about how to keep residents safe instead of being mandated by the state to engage in potentially unconstitutional behavior.

3) Anti-immigrant bills will be expensive to implement, and will likely open the state and individual municipalities to expensive law suits. In a time of budget shortfalls, the state legislature should be focused on issues like access to healthcare, fair wages, and education funding that are important to Pennsylvanians, not creating expensive solutions to non-existent problems.

What Do We Want? A State that Welcomes and Protects Immigrants and Refugees

- Policies that ensure local law enforcement does not ask about immigration status or act in any way as federal immigration (ICE) officers. These policies make our communities safer by allowing local law enforcement to build relationships with community and focus on community safety.
- School policies that welcome and protect students and parents regardless of immigration status, religion, race, sexual orientation, or disability. Quality education depends on students feeling safe at their schools.
- An end to stop and frisk, racial profiling, and other police practices that target and criminalize immigrants and communities of color.
- Increased support for ESL and citizenship programs.
- To shut down the Berks Family Detention Center.
- Tuition equity for all students enrolled at universities and colleges in Pennsylvania regardless of immigration status.
- Equal access to driver’s licenses regardless of immigration status.

Messaging Pitfalls to Avoid

Talking about immigration quickly brings us to how we define ourselves as a country and who is a “real” American and who isn’t. On top of that, immigration law is confusing, making it difficult to explain in just a few sentences. This makes debates around immigration emotional and complicated, and it is easy to unintentionally use words and arguments that erase people’s experiences and harm vulnerable communities. This is a brief outline of some of the most common pitfalls we see in immigration debates.

- Good/Bad immigrant narrative: examples of this are “felons not families” or “we are workers not criminals” or “refugees deserve protection because they came the right way”
 - Framing some immigrants as more deserving of protection divides our communities and continues the idea that some people are “more human” or “less human.”
 - Framing refugees as deserving because they have legal status separates them from the larger immigrant rights struggle, and erases the history of discrimination and racism in immigration law and who has been allowed, or not allowed, to enter the country with legal status.
 - This messaging also feeds anti-black narratives around criminality
- Anti-Sanctuary bills are about Philadelphia
 - Philadelphia is not the only city that limits cooperation between local law enforcement and ICE. Currently about 30 counties and a handful of municipalities have similar policies across Pennsylvania.
 - The politics of Pennsylvania mean that pitting Philadelphia against Harrisburg is a liability for any issue, and actually decreases the success of our advocacy.
- All pro-immigrant policies are not “sanctuary” policies. Most policies or statements that claim “sanctuary” status do not provide any meaningful protections against ICE and none of them halt deportations.
 - The term “sanctuary” is connected to a long movement of physically protecting families from being deported. That history should be honored by ensuring claiming “sanctuary” status is connected to community-led definitions and campaigns.
 - Alternatives could include: human rights zone, welcoming campus, 4th Amendment city.
- “We are all immigrants” or “This is a country of immigrants.” This message erases the experiences and history of many people living in this country.
 - Many native peoples lived in this country before Europeans settled here, and the first Europeans to come to this country were not “immigrants” but settlers who pushed out and took land from the native people who already lived here.
 - Those brought to the US as slaves were not immigrants, and formerly enslaved people had a long fight to obtain citizenship.
 - Puerto Ricans and other residents of US territories are U.S. citizens.

Responding to Some Myths and Misinformation

- “People Just Need to Get in Line”: There are only 4 ways to gain permanent legal status in the US: 1) offered a job by a US employer because of a skill; 2) escaping persecution; 3) joining a close family member in the US; 4) winning the green-card lottery. There is no line for the most individuals, including the majority of people currently in the U.S. without legal status.
- “Immigrants increase crime” or “Sanctuary Cities increase crime”: Like U.S. born citizens, some immigrants do commit crimes. However, studies have repeatedly shown that cities that welcome and support immigrant communities regardless of legal status do not see an increase in crime, and often have lower crime rates than other cities.¹
- “Anyone Can Come to the U.S. as a Refugee”: Under U.S. and international law, a refugee is someone outside his or her own country with a well-founded fear of persecution in that country based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The United States is one of 28 resettlement countries.
- “We Don’t Know Who These People Are”: The United States decides which refugees are resettled, and refugees are the most thoroughly screened individuals in the United States. Refugees must pass through a series of security screenings, including biographic and biometric checks, medical screenings, forensic document testing, and in-person interviews. The information examined to confirm a refugee’s identity is checked against law enforcement and intelligence databases, including those of the National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of State, and Department of Homeland Security. If there is any doubt about who a refugee is, he or she will not be admitted to the United States.
- “We Are Accepting Too Many Refugees”: The vast majority of the world’s refugees live in countries that neighbor the countries that they have fled. Available to less than 1% of the world’s refugees, resettlement is the last resort for refugees who cannot return to their homes and are not permitted to rebuild their lives in a nearby country. Last year over 65 million people were displaced from their country, the U.S. accepted less than 100,000 refugees.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/26/us/trump-illegal-immigrants-crime.html>
https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Appendix-D_0.pdf
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/02/170210165953.htm>