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JUSTICE NEWS

Attorney General Sessions Delivers Remarks Discussing the Immigration Enforcement Actions of the Trump Administration

San Diego, CA ~ Monday, May 7, 2018

Thank you all for being here.

Thank you to Tom Homan. Tom, you have done outstanding work leading ICE. Thank you for your more than 30 years of service in law enforcement. We are going to miss you.

Today we are here to send a message to the world: we are not going to let this country be overwhelmed.

People are not going to caravan or otherwise stampede our border.

We need legality and integrity in the system.

That's why the Department of Homeland Security is now referring 100 percent of illegal Southwest Border crossings to the Department of Justice for prosecution. And the Department of Justice will take up those cases.

I have put in place a "zero tolerance" policy for illegal entry on our Southwest border. If you cross this border unlawfully, then we will prosecute you. It's that simple.

If you smuggle illegal aliens across our border, then we will prosecute you.

If you are smuggling a child, then we will prosecute you and that child will be separated from you as required by law.

If you make false statements to an immigration officer or file a fraudulent asylum claim, that's a felony.

If you help others to do so, that's a felony, too. You're going to jail.

So if you're going to come to this country, come here legally. Don't come here illegally.

In order to carry out these important new enforcement policies, I have sent 35 prosecutors to the Southwest and moved 18 immigration judges to the border. These are supervisory judges that don't have existing caseloads and will be able to function full time on moving these cases. That will be about a 50 percent increase in the number of immigration judges who will be handling the asylum claims.

These actions are necessary. And they are made even more necessary by the massive increases in illegal crossings in recent months. This February saw 55 percent more border apprehensions than last February. This March saw triple the number from last March. April saw triple the number last April.

The trends are clear: this must end.

Eleven million people are already here illegally. That's more than the population of Portugal or the state of Georgia.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that those 11 million have 4.5 million children who are American citizens. Combined, that group would be our fifth-most populous state.

This situation has been many years in the making.

For decades, the American people have been pleading with our elected representatives for a lawful system of immigration that serves the national interest—a system we can be proud of.

That is not too much to ask. The American people are right and just and decent to ask for this. They are right to want a safe, secure border and a government that knows who is here and who isn't.

Donald Trump ran for office on that idea. I believe that is a big reason why he won. He is on fire about this. This entire government knows it.

The American people have a right to expect that the laws that their representatives voted for are going to be carried out. Failure to enforce our duly-enacted laws would be an affront to the American people and a threat to our very system of self-government.

And these laws are the most generous immigration laws in the world. We accept 1.1 million lawful permanent residents every year—that's more than the population of Montana, every single year. These are the highest numbers in the world.

I have no doubt that many of those crossing our border illegally are leaving difficult situations. But we cannot take everyone on Earth who is in a difficult situation.

According to a Gallup poll from a few years ago, 150 million people around the world want to immigrate to the United States. Gallup says that 37 percent of Liberians want to immigrate to the United States. One fifth of Cambodians want to move here. One-in-six Salvadorans are already in the United States—and another 19 percent tell Gallup they want to come here.

It's obvious that we cannot take everyone who wants to come here without also hurting the interests of the citizens we are sworn to serve and protect.

We have to have limits. And Congress has already set them.

And if you want to change our laws, then pass a bill in Congress. Persuade your fellow citizens to your point of view.

Immigrants should ask to apply lawfully before they enter our country. Citizens of other countries don't get to violate our laws or rewrite them for us. People around the world have no right to demand entry in violation of our sovereignty.

This is a great nation—the greatest in the history of the world. It is no surprise that people want to come here. But they must do so properly. They must follow our laws—or not come here at all. Make no mistake, the objections, the lawsuits, the sanctuary jurisdictions are often the product of a radical open border philosophy. They oppose all enforcement.

And so this Department, under President Trump's leadership, is enforcing the law without exception. We will finally secure this border so that we can give the American people safety and peace of mind. That's what the people deserve.

Thank you.

Speaker:
Attorney General Jeff Sessions

Component(s):
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