



IMMIGRATION UPDATE - JANUARY 27, 2025

Posted on January 27, 2025 by Cyrus Mehta

Headlines:

[The First Week: Round-Up of Key Trump Immigration Actions](#) – This article summarizes key highlights among the flurry of immigration-related actions since President Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2025.

[Senate Confirms Kristi Noem as Homeland Security Secretary](#) – The U.S. Senate confirmed Kristi Noem as Secretary of Homeland Security. She will oversee U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

[USCIS Waives COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement for Adjustment of Status Applicants](#) – Effective January 22, 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is waiving "any and all requirements" that applicants for adjustment of status to permanent residence present documentation that they received the COVID-19 vaccination.

Details:

The First Week: Round-Up of Key Trump Immigration Actions

As expected, there has been a flurry of immigration-related actions since President-elect Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2025. Selected key highlights include:

- **Wide-ranging Executive Order issued, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion."** On January 20, 2025, President Trump signed an [Executive Order](#) with a long list of effects. Included in the list is a revocation of various Biden administration orders and related guidance, memoranda, and policies; a focus on enforcement of orders of removal and the "prosecution of criminal offenses related to the unauthorized

entry or continued unauthorized presence of aliens in the United States"; efforts to identify "unregistered illegal aliens"; the "the efficient and expedited removal of aliens from the United States"; the construction and operation of detention facilities; withholding of federal funds from "sanctuary" jurisdictions; "significantly increase the number of agents and officers available to perform the duties of immigration officers"; and other orders.

- The Executive Order, through federal-state agreement, also calls for authorizing state and local law enforcement officials "to perform the functions of immigration officers in relation to the investigation, apprehension, or detention of aliens in the United States under the direction and the supervision of the Secretary of Homeland Security."
- The Executive Order also orders the Attorney General and the Secretary of Homeland Security to jointly establish "Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs)" in every state nationwide. The composition of each HSTF will "be subject to the direction of the Attorney General and the Secretary of Homeland Security, but shall include representation from any other Federal agencies with law enforcement officers, or agencies with the ability to provide logistics, intelligence, and operational support to the HSTFs, and shall also include representation from relevant State and local law enforcement agencies." The objective of each HSTF is "to end the presence of criminal cartels, foreign gangs, and transnational criminal organizations throughout the United States, dismantle cross-border human smuggling and trafficking networks, end the scourge of human smuggling and trafficking, with a particular focus on such offenses involving children, and ensure the use of all available law enforcement tools to faithfully execute the immigration laws of the United States."
- **"Remain in Mexico" program relaunched.** President Trump announced the relaunch of the Migrant Protection Protocols program, also known as "Remain in Mexico," under which asylum seekers wishing to enter the United States via Mexico must remain in Mexico while their cases are processed. However, Mexico's President, Claudia Sheinbaum, said [Mexico has not agreed](#) to accept non-Mexican asylum seekers. The program previously had been introduced by President Trump in 2019 but was discontinued by President Biden in 2021. Mexico said that it will welcome returning Mexicans and is [setting up a "tent city"](#) to house and tend to deportees. Also, after [Colombia rejected two U.S. military planes](#) carrying

deported persons, President Trump ordered various "retaliatory" measures, including tariffs, visa sanctions, and travel bans. Colombia, which is the [third largest trading partner with the United States in Latin America](#), countered with tariffs of its own. Among other things, imports from Colombia include coffee and cut flowers. Gustavo Petro, President of Colombia, [said](#), "The U.S. cannot treat Colombian migrants as criminals," [and](#) "his measure responds to the Government's commitment to guarantee dignified conditions. In no way have Colombians, as patriots and subjects of rights, been or will be banished from Colombian territory."

- **Refugee admissions program suspended; funding cut off.** Effective January 27, 2025, an Executive Order [suspends refugee admissions](#), with some exceptions on a case-by-case basis. The program will be reviewed in three months. As part of this effort, the Department of State (DOS) suspended funding to groups aiding refugees in the United States with housing, job placement, and other needs, *Reuters* [reported](#). A letter from DOS said such agencies must stop all related work and "cancel as many outstanding obligations as possible." Scheduled refugee arrivals were halted as a result, including nearly [1,660 Afghans who had been cleared to resettle in the United States](#), a group that includes Afghans at risk of retribution by the Taliban after fighting for the previous U.S.-backed Afghan government, family members of U.S. service members on active duty, and unaccompanied minors who had been scheduled to reunite with their families.
- **"Finding of Mass Influx of Aliens" announced.** On January 23, 2025, Benjamin Huffman, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, [declared](#) that a "mass influx of aliens is arriving at the southern border of the United States and presents urgent circumstances requiring an immediate federal response." The finding expires in 60 days unless extended.
- **Directive expanding immigration law enforcement to some Department of Justice (DOJ) officials.** On January 23, 2025, the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security issued a [directive](#) giving DOJ law enforcement officials in the U.S. Marshals, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and Federal Bureau of Prisons "authority to investigate and apprehend illegal aliens."
- **CBP One app shut down.** The app allowed people to apply for asylum. Previously, asylum seekers were able to submit advance information and

schedule appointments at eight southwest border ports of entry. All such appointments have been [cancelled](#), U.S. Customs and Border Protection said.

- **'Illegal alien' terminology reinstated.** The Department of Homeland Security [reinstated](#) official use of the term "illegal alien" over "undocumented noncitizen."
- **Birthright citizenship challenged.** President Trump ordered birthright citizenship to be discontinued, but one court has already issued an injunction on the ground that such a move is unconstitutional.
- **Deportations.** Mass deportations at the anticipated scale have not yet begun, although [activities](#) such as arrests and flights with deported persons have been carried out, along with a call for the U.S. military to be deployed to the southern border, and the lifting of rules that restricted enforcement near sensitive areas like churches and schools. Mexico [denied permission](#) for the United States to fly a C-17 military transport aircraft land in Mexico with persons deported from the United States. Two similar flights with about 80 passengers each went to Guatemala. Meanwhile, immigrant advocacy organizations are putting out "[know your rights](#)" information.

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Senate Confirms Kristi Noem as Homeland Security Secretary

On Saturday, January 25, 2025, the U.S. Senate [confirmed](#) Kristi Noem as Secretary of Homeland Security. She will oversee U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. She previously was governor of South Dakota. Ms. Noem also served in the South Dakota legislature and as South Dakota's sole member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

President Trump separately appointed Tom Homan as "border czar." It is unclear what role Mr. Homan will play in working with Secretary Noem.

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USCIS Waives COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement for Adjustment of Status Applicants

Effective January 22, 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is

[waiving](#) "any and all requirements" that applicants for adjustment of status to permanent residence present documentation on their Form I-693, Report of Immigration Medical Examination and Vaccination Record, that they received the COVID-19 vaccination.

USCIS said it will not issue any Request for Evidence or Notice of Intent to Deny related to proving a COVID-19 vaccination or deny any adjustment of status application on that basis.

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