



The State of Immigration Law

- A record high of more than 34 million foreign-born persons reside in the United States (this includes lawful permanent residents and naturalized U.S. citizens).
- An estimated 9 to 12 million foreign-born persons are undocumented.
- U.S. immigration laws and policies have become increasingly restrictive and challenging for immigrants and asylum seekers.
- The current immigration law does not provide a pathway for undocumented people to legalize their status. It does not provide an adequate number of visas for immigrants seeking to work in service sector positions.
- Catholic immigration legal service programs therefore have to turn down services to most undocumented people because there is no immigration benefit for which the agency can help them apply.
- The result is that many otherwise law-abiding residents are forced to live in the shadows of society.
- The current law provides disproportionate punishments for minor civil immigration violations, which forces undocumented immigrants to hide deeper in the shadows.
- Undocumented immigrants are hard-working people who are trying to make a living and trying to support their families. They do not come to the United States seeking public benefits or seeking to commit crimes.
- Current proposals to change the immigration law would convert immigration civil violations into crimes and would criminalize church workers who provide humanitarian assistance to undocumented people.
- There are many unscrupulous people out there who take advantage of undocumented immigrants because they know that undocumented immigrants will not go to the police out of fear of deportation.
- For example, the term *notario* is used in many Latin American countries to refer to someone who is authorized to provide legal advice. In the United States, however, a notary public is generally only authorized to witness signatures. Nevertheless, many people call themselves *notarios* knowing that undocumented people will think that they can provide legal advice. The undocumented people often pay *notarios* thousands of dollars for help in regularizing their status even though the *notario* does not tell the undocumented person that s/he is not eligible for any immigration benefit. The result is that the *notario* earns a great deal of money while the undocumented person is placed in deportation proceedings.