

ADMINISTRATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITIES 2021



CATHOLIC LEGAL
IMMIGRATION
NETWORK, INC.

[cliniclegal.org](https://www.cliniclegal.org)

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

CLINIC's Administrative Advocacy Priorities serve as a guide for CLINIC's work as a national thought leader and strategist on administrative advocacy. For 2021 CLINIC's priorities focus on the essential mission of rebuilding a just and humane immigration system.

CLINIC's advocacy efforts are guided by our Catholic identity, counseled by our team of in-house experts, and informed by our network of approximately 370 network agencies. As a leader in administrative advocacy, CLINIC is a first responder to immigration law and policy changes, whether fighting to hold back attacks on immigrant rights or working side-by-side with the government to build the structures that offer welcome, safety, security, and family unity to those seeking to make the United States home.

Tools of administrative advocacy involve direct government engagement, formally responding to regulatory proposals through the federal rulemaking process, providing technical expertise to members of Congress and investigatory bodies, working strategically with the media, leading campaigns and coalitions, litigation, outreach and education, trainings and resources, and more. CLINIC's advocacy work follows a progression designed for maximum impact – always beginning with direct government engagement and layering strategies as that advocacy becomes exhausted or additional tactics are needed. Through this model, CLINIC establishes the foundation that leads to more effective Congressional oversight and litigation and consequently, accountability and justice.

Most importantly, while strategies may differ depending on the issue at hand, our theory of change is unwavering: CLINIC's work upholds the dignity and responds to the goals of directly impacted communities. As we look ahead to 2021, CLINIC will particularly focus on advocating for the rights and dignity of Black immigrants.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt. 25:35)

IN 2021 CLINIC WILL ADVOCATE TO:

Repeal Trump-era policies and bans that dehumanize, violate human rights, and tear families apart and secure immediate emergency protections for vulnerable populations

In the first 100 days and beyond, CLINIC and partners will engage in the work of undoing, rebuilding, and transforming the immigration system the previous administration attempted to dismantle. CLINIC will advocate to repeal the Muslim and Africa bans, Remain in Mexico and other anti-asylum bans and policies, as well as Trump-era executive orders. CLINIC will seek to revise policy on enforcement, expedited removal, public charge, and other matters which challenge the safety and dignity of immigrants. CLINIC will also seek immediate protection for highly vulnerable populations including people trapped in the Remain in Mexico program, Liberians whose Deferred Enforced Departure has ended, DACA recipients, and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), holders whose status the Trump administration attempted to terminate. CLINIC will also advocate for immediate protection for the countries that should have been newly designated or redesignated for TPS.

Restore, rebuild, and improve Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of State (DOS) and component agencies

A top priority of CLINIC's 2021 advocacy work will be to advocate for restoring and rebuilding functional agency structures, including reestablishing productive stakeholder communications. This includes rebuilding USCIS, beginning with a call for USCIS to reinstate its mission statement stating that the United States is a "nation of immigrants" and to honor its Congressional mandate as a benefits processing agency. CLINIC will continue to work closely with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) on appropriations advocacy and call on USCIS to prioritize backlog reduction by ending policies that led to historic inefficiency such as the Notice to Appear policy, guidance regarding deference to prior determinations, extreme vetting and mandatory interviews. Simultaneously, CLINIC will call on USCIS to restore critical infrastructure such as InfoPass and foreign offices abroad while adjusting the size and purview of fraud units in proportion with adjudications. CLINIC will support efforts to have an immigration court system that is not under-resourced or politicized, provides due process and conducts fair and efficient hearings and appeals. CLINIC also will seek to rebuild issue-specific stakeholder roundtables and robust public outreach and engagement in order to reestablish the feedback loops and communication channels necessary for agency functionality. Finally, CLINIC will provide technical expertise to Congress on how to ensure USCIS cannot be weaponized and turned into a machine to suppress immigration and support enforcement again.

Advocate for government task forces focused on key immigration issues and vulnerable populations

CLINIC will advocate to reinstate the White House Task Force on Integration, and to create new task forces. These would include a White House Office of New Americans, a task force focusing on the state of Black immigrants, and a task force to reunite families ripped apart under the previous administration, which will also seek reparations for these families.

Work to ensure humanitarian protections are restored and prioritized going forward

CLINIC believes that offering safe haven to those in need should be prioritized in a just and humane immigration system. Accordingly, CLINIC will advocate to restore and/or reform TPS, asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status



(SIJS), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), and will push for greater protections for VAWA, U and T visa applicants, and more. We will seek for DOJ to restore funding for its technical assistance grants focusing on foreign-born and limited English speaking survivors – funding categories that were eliminated by the Trump Administration. We will also work to support USCCB/MRS’s efforts to advocate for generous refugee admissions and the programs that facilitate resettlement in the United States, including rescinding Trump-era executive orders that affect refugee resettlement. CLINIC will pay particular attention to access to humanitarian protection for Black immigrants. CLINIC will also work to ensure the United States takes a leading role in the world as a provider of humanitarian protections.

Advocate for policies and programs that honor the sanctity of the family by maintaining and restoring family unity

CLINIC will work to improve access to family-based immigration as well as support efforts for permanent protections that will keep families safe, free, and together. Work will include withdrawing the public charge regulation and other policies that put up barriers for low-income immigrants. CLINIC will continue to work closely with USCCB/MRS to ensure USCIS is appropriately resourced to reduce case processing backlogs and processing times. CLINIC will also support a pathway to citizenship for the entire undocumented population. CLINIC will advocate for the proper and effective implementation of the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness program. CLINIC will encourage the Biden administration to establish a return after deportation program to restore families torn apart by enforcement under the Trump-era policies (which disproportionately impacted Black immigrant families).

Improve immigrant integration and access to naturalization for all who qualify

CLINIC will call on the Biden administration to establish a national office of New Americans at the White House that will promote and prioritize immigrant integration programs. CLINIC will seek an expansion of the Citizenship and Integration grant program to help rebuild capacity and resources. CLINIC will seek to eliminate excessive fee increases for naturalization and the reinstatement of fee waivers, until fees can be reduced or eliminated. CLINIC will continue to advocate for access to naturalization for those with mental and physical disabilities. CLINIC will call on the Biden administration to reduce the naturalization case backlogs and reduce case processing times.

CLINIC will continue to advocate for the institution of remote and/or social distanced (i.e. drive-in) naturalization oath ceremonies. CLINIC will seek an immediate halt to USCIS' naturalization test pilot program to allow for review of program objectives and process. CLINIC will also urge the Biden administration to immediately eliminate the denaturalization task force and restore language on integration in USCIS materials. CLINIC will continue to work with USCCB/MRS to advocate for suitable appropriations to facilitate these priorities. We will work with USCCB/MRS to ask Congress for an expansion of the English language waiver age and residency rules for the naturalization test.

Join partners in the mission to end mass immigrant incarceration and deportation

No human being should be incarcerated for an immigration violation and CLINIC calls for a temporary moratorium on all detentions and deportations. CLINIC will work in coalition with partners and support campaigns to end practices that torture and punish people for crossing borders. CLINIC will particularly look to support efforts focused on ending the mass incarceration of Black immigrants in the immigration system and detention of children. CLINIC will also advocate for the end of 287(g), expanding sensitive locations, and work to put in place a policy prohibiting ICE from issuing detainers.

Restore, rebuild, and improve access to justice in the immigration court system

CLINIC will advocate for proper and fair case review by calling for an increase in the number and diversity of Immigration Judges, or IJs, and courts, reducing individual IJ workloads, and eliminating performance metrics including the requirement for IJs to "complete" 700 cases per year. CLINIC will also advocate for IJs to have regular trauma-informed training and for a transparent process in which complaints against IJs can be submitted without fear of retribution. CLINIC will call for restoring strategic IJ case management tools and will seek BIA and Attorney General opinions to overturn Trump era decisions that eroded due process, justice, and a humane system. CLINIC will also support efforts for more pro se resources, universal access to counsel in immigration court, and for an independent immigration court system that is outside of the DOJ, under Article I of the Constitution.

Expand access to immigration legal representation and combat fraud

CLINIC will work to restore, reclaim, and improve the Recognition and Accreditation program, which creates access to representation for low-income immigrants. We will advocate for sufficient authority and autonomy for the program to remove it from political influence and insulate it against any future politicization. We will support efforts



to put in place sufficient funding for the program to ensure that the capacity building goal of the program cannot be impacted by political financial decisions. We will seek sufficient OLAP staffing levels to adjudicate Recognition and Accreditation applications, eliminate current backlogs, and set a timely goal for future applications (average 4 months). CLINIC will simultaneously continue its state and local campaign to combat immigration legal services fraud and work with USCIS on public education.

Improve pathways for religious workers

As the nation's premiere law firm serving religious workers, CLINIC will work closely with USCCB/MRS to advocate for permanent extension of the Special Immigrant Religious Worker program. CLINIC will also advocate for programs and policies that improve access to immigration for religious workers, including improved customer service, reduced process times, updated expedite criteria, and more. CLINIC will also renew efforts to advocate for the establishment of a Religious Workers-In-Residence program. We envision this program would be comprised of a multi-faith group of religious experts that would advise USCIS on the traditions and procedures of different faiths as well as specific issues that religious workers and their petitioners encounter when submitting applications to the agency.

Support partners in root causes, human rights, and foreign policy work

CLINIC recognizes the intersection of immigration with other humanitarian and foreign policy issues. To that end, CLINIC will support partners engaged in this work and seek to incorporate these perspectives into administrative advocacy work, particularly the work of Catholic partners.

Build a new pro-immigrant narrative in the United States

CLINIC will use its voice and leadership role to uplift the voices and stories of immigrants, particularly Black immigrants. CLINIC will affirmatively call out racism as a sin and reject the politicization of human life. In 2021, CLINIC will continue to build its media and social media engagement to restore a narrative that emphasizes the humanity, rights and dignity of immigrants.

“[O]ur response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration can be summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. Yet these verbs do not apply only to migrants and refugees. They describe the Church’s mission to all those living in the existential peripheries, who need to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated. If we put those four verbs into practice, we will help build the city of God and man. We will promote the integral human development of all people.”

— Pope Francis, Message for the 105th World Day of Migrants and Refugees September 29, 2019

CLINIC has been promoting the dignity and protecting the rights of immigrants for more than 30 years. The Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc., has been on the cutting edge of training nonprofit immigration legal service providers to provide affordable, quality legal representation to immigrants since its founding in 1988. Today, the network includes more than 380 nonprofit organizations in 49 states.



cliniclegal.org