AILA 2020 Presidential Candidate Survey

1. How do you propose to improve America’s legal immigration system to ensure it meets the needs of American families, communities, and businesses?

Our immigration system should reflect our values. Separating children from their families, abusive and indefinite detention of immigrants, and shutting the door to desperate refugees does not reflect who we are as Americans. As mayor, I worked to make Newark a national leader among cities in protecting the safety and well-being of all of its residents, including undocumented immigrants, by instituting a sanctuary city policy in the city. In the Senate, I have fought to end the costly, cruel, and unnecessary mass detention of immigrants and immigrant families by sponsoring the boldest detention reform package in Congress, the Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act, to reform immigration enforcement, and to address the root causes of the current migration crisis.

As president, I will make sure that our immigration system treats immigrants with dignity because when people cross borders, they bring their human rights with them. I will fight for a system that recognizes that immigrants make our country stronger and that we need each other to move our country forward. I will fight for the passage of legislation in Congress that reforms our immigration system and provides earned citizenship for the millions of undocumented immigrants living and working with us as our family members, colleagues, neighbors, and friends.

But I understand the urgency of this issue. We can’t wait for Congress to act. That’s why, starting on Day One, I will use my executive authority to virtually eliminate our nation’s reliance on immigration incarceration and immediately end the use of for-profit detention facilities.

2. Do you support reforms to ensure USCIS upholds its service-oriented mission to adjudicate immigration benefits in a fair and timely fashion? (Yes/No)

3. How would you reform USCIS to uphold its mission to adjudicate immigration benefits in a fair and timely fashion?

In addition to pursuing his misguided border wall, and attempting to institute a bigoted Muslim Ban, this president has also sought to undermine our legal immigration system. The USCIS is intended to be a service-oriented immigration benefits agency focused on the administration of benefit applications, but the current administration has instead re-directed its efforts to serve as yet another immigration enforcement agency. The consequences have been dire--USCIS case processing times has increased by 46 percent from 2016 to 2018.
As president, I will eliminate the un-American “public charge” rule, that restricts immigrant families from accessing critical benefits like food stamps or Medicaid—and burdens USCIS by forcing every green card applicant to appear for an in-person interview. We need to restore the purpose and mission statement of the USCIS to be a service-oriented immigration benefits agency.

4. How would you address the population of unauthorized immigrants in the United States, including Dreamers, DACA recipients, and TPS recipients?

As president, I would fight to restore and expand policies that provide protection to Dreamers, their families, individuals with TPS, and those with DED status. But I would also go beyond that, and promote opportunities to help beneficiaries pursue available pathways to citizenship as outlined in Rep. Roybal-Allard’s *Dream and Promise Act*.

5. Do you support enactment of a legalization plan that provides unauthorized immigrants lawful permanent resident status and the opportunity to apply for citizenship? (Yes/No)

6. Do you support the creation of an independent Article I immigration court system? (Yes/No)

7. How would you reform the immigration court system to ensure the fair and effective administration of justice?

Despite hiring immigration judges at a faster rate than ever before, and imposing draconian quotas on immigration judges, the immigration court system’s backlog has ballooned under this administration—the number of days to complete a court case has reached a 10-year high and the backlog has grown by roughly 68 percent. I will roll back the executive actions that have increased the backlog, including case quotas, and reinstate administrative closure authority to give judges the ability to waive automatic inadmissibility or deportation.

We also need to expand legal counsel for all immigrants, and create a fair and human bond process by shifting federal enforcement priorities from a presumption of detention to a presumption of liberty.

8. How would you improve immigration enforcement and ensure accountability over the agencies responsible for the enforcement of immigration law?

We are now spending unprecedented amounts of money on immigration enforcement—the budgets of ICE and CBP are more than $20 billion. Despite these resources, ICE overspends its budget—routinely borrowing money from other DHS programs, such as FEMA—to needlessly detain more and more children and families. And it’s not just ICE that operates in a way that does not reflect our values, the information coming out about the culture at CBP is equally concerning. We need to have hearings and real oversight into both of these agencies and ensure they are achieving their intended purpose before we continue pouring billions of dollars into them. I will also end ICE partnerships with local law enforcement and ensure
local and state law enforcement are focused on keeping their communities safe and pursuing serious threats.

9. Do you support the reduction of immigration detention, including reduction in U.S. taxpayer funding of immigration detention? (Yes/No)

10. How would you ensure the fair, humane and efficient screening of migrants coming to the southern border of the United States?

I will fight to make sure that our immigration system treats immigrants with dignity because when people cross borders, they bring their human rights with them. On Day One of my presidency, I will begin to end the abuses of the Trump administration and use my executive authority to reform our immigration system. That starts with ending this administration’s Remain in Mexico and asylum metering policies, increasing the cap on refugees to a minimum of 110,000, and strengthening staffing at the border for interviews for asylum seekers and in-country refugee processing in Central America.

My plan to use executive action to address the crisis at the border would virtually eliminate our nation’s reliance on immigration incarceration, including ending the use of for-profit detention facilities. It would also create a presumption of liberty with a fair and humane bond process that ensures a fair bond hearing and takes into account the immigrant’s ability to pay when setting bond. As president, I will invest in alternatives to detention, including community-based management programs, that are cheaper, more effective and more humane than detention.

11. How would you address the root causes of migration that is resulting in more people fleeing from violence and persecution in the Americas region?

As president, I will appoint a Special Envoy at the State Department to lead Administration efforts and focus on the root causes of migration - corruption, violence, poverty, and climate change. Instead of slow-walking and proposing to cut the disbursement of crucial foreign aid funds to address the root causes of migration like the Trump administration has done, I would increase foreign aid to address the root causes of migration by a minimum of $1.5 billion, as outlined in the Central America Reform and Enforcement Act, which I have co-sponsored in the Senate. I would appoint a Special Envoy to focus on and prioritize addressing the root causes of migration by:

- Leading a comprehensive strategy to invest in democratic institutions and reduce corruption
- Reducing violence and crime
- Fighting poverty and supporting economic development
- Recognizing the role of climate change and identifying strategies to mitigate its effects on migration.

12. Do you support the right to legal counsel for people facing removal, including counsel paid-for by the government for those who cannot afford it? (Yes/No)
13. How would you ensure people facing removal receive legal counsel and have meaningful access to their counsel?

As president, I will expand legal counsel for all immigrants, starting with immigrant children. Access to legal counsel remains a challenge: about two-thirds of immigrants face their deportation proceedings without a lawyer. And representation matters. Studies show that immigrants with legal representation are at least twice as likely to gain lawful protection in the United States. Further, when individuals are represented by counsel they are nearly 100% certain to comply with their court dates. Deportation cases can be matters of life and death. The Trump administration tried to end the Legal Orientation Program (LOP) that provided basic information to immigrants in detention about their process and rights. I will use my authority as president to expand access to counsel and the LOP to cover all detention centers and immigration courts and expand access to counsel for immigrants, especially unaccompanied immigrant children.