



# Four Pillars

Border Security and Visa Reform





**“WE NEED TALL FENCES AND WIDE GATES TO SECURE THE BORDER.”**

CHIEF PATROL AGENT CHRIS CLEM (RET.)

“Our Southern Border is a mess. Currently, we have a system where our agents are spending the vast majority of their time processing asylum seekers, leaving the rest of our border open for bad actors to exploit.

We need tall fences and wide gates to secure the border. The metaphorical tall fences stand for border security, which includes actual fences in strategic locations, access roads, increases in personnel, and modernized technology. The wide gates stand for ample and easily available legal pathways so that people don’t stream the border and overwhelm our agents.”

# THE FOUR PILLARS

Border Security and Visa Reform

Americans for Prosperity’s Four Pillars presents a policy framework that prioritizes border security, economic competitiveness, and upholding the rule of law. We champion a society governed by clear and enforced laws, with policies that adapt to ensure America’s enduring security and economic prosperity.

## 01 SECURE BORDER AND PORTS

Essential for national security and are the first component of upholding the rule of law.

## 02 INCREASE AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS

China is racing to get ahead. We are in a fierce global competition for breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and bioengineering. The United States must prioritize attracting the best minds from around the world to secure its leadership position and shape the ethical trajectory of these transformative technologies.

## 03 CLEAR AND PREDICTABLE RULES

Our current immigration system, with its selectively enforced, confusing, and constantly changing regulations, incentivizes bad actors while penalizing law-abiding individuals. We must simplify these rules to create a system that benefits honest people while holding dangerous and unscrupulous individuals accountable.

## 04 TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND DUE PROCESS

We need regular reports from the Department of Homeland Security that are precise and easy to understand. It is equally important to prevent arbitrary decisions and violations of due process, which harm everyone’s confidence in the system.



# PILLAR ONE

Secure Border and Ports. Modern, Efficient, and Alert.



## PERSONNEL, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY.

America's security relies on the safe and lawful entry of people and goods by air, land, and ports. We need to attract and retain more CBP personnel, build roads along the border, erect barriers in strategic locations, and modernize our cameras, drones, and video-sharing capabilities. In addition to the Southern Border, there are vast unpatrolled areas along our Northern Border where drugs and terrorists have been known to slip in.

## IMPROVED CONDITIONS FOR BORDER AGENTS.

More than 1/4 of all CBP & ICE officers are considering leaving their job, and suicides are at a 13-year high. Addressing this border crisis and improving morale is crucial for personnel retention and suicide prevention.



## LOWER THE “GOT-AWAY” RATE.

There have been approximately 1.7 million **known** got-aways that crossed the southwestern border from when President Biden took office until the end of Fiscal Year 2023.

As a country, it is important that we have knowledge and operational control of who is coming and who is leaving. Our federal government creates order by defending us from those that present risks to national security and our rule of law.





Americans for Prosperity believes in requiring individuals to follow the rules. By strengthening border security and imposing swift consequences for visa overstay, we send a clear message that we are serious about upholding the law. At the same time, we also recognize the need for clear and predictable pathways for those who wish to come to America to work.

Polling consistently shows that most Americans believe legal immigration is beneficial to the country. Historically, there has been wide support for immigration reform that addresses border security and expands visa programs for high-skilled and agricultural workers.



Since 2023, the Americans for Prosperity Foundation has taken more than 165 individuals from various parts of the country to Yuma, Arizona, and McAllen, Texas, to find out if their assumptions about the U.S.-Mexico border matched reality.

Participants were offered a full-scope overview of the border situation, engaging with Border Patrol agents, local business owners, and volunteers at charitable organizations assisting migrants. With only around 16,000 officers for the entire U.S.-Mexico border, the current workforce falls significantly short of what is needed to handle the constant flow of migrants.



# PILLAR TWO

Boost American Competitiveness. Strengthen the Economy.

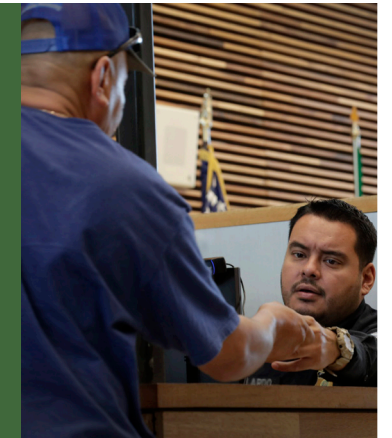


## ATTRACT AND RETAIN THE BEST TALENT IN AMERICA. NOT CHINA.

Our inefficient system has driven top inventors to seek opportunities in China and Taiwan, where they have made significant contributions to advancements in semiconductors and 5G. To ensure that the United States remains a leader in innovation, we must modernize our immigration policies and attract the best minds from around the world.

## UNNECESSARY IMMIGRATION BACKLOGS COST AMERICA BILLIONS.

Thousands of talented engineers, physicians, and other skilled professionals are stuck waiting years for permanent residency due to a bureaucratic system riddled with unnecessary and redundant procedures that impede both U.S. security and economic prosperity. Clearing this backlog would inject an estimated \$110 billion annually into the U.S. economy.



## PROTECT CRITICAL DOMESTIC RESEARCH FROM FOREIGN ESPIONAGE.

While attracting the world's top talent is crucial, we must also carefully manage potential risks like espionage and intellectual property theft. This requires policymakers to implement thorough vetting procedures for visa applicants in sensitive fields like nuclear engineering. Additionally, we need robust safeguards to protect defense-related research in government agencies, businesses, and universities.

The U.S. immigration system is outdated and needs a complete overhaul to align with the economic and national security needs of all Americans. As other countries like China actively recruit talent and expertise, our cumbersome and backlogged system is driving away potential contributors. We must urgently streamline our processes to ensure America remains competitive on the global stage.



# PILLAR THREE

Clear Rules and Outcomes.

CB  
FIELD OPER  
FEDERAL O



## SWIFT AND PROPORTIONATE CONSEQUENCES FOR VISA OVERSTAYERS.

Roughly half of the undocumented population in the U.S. consists of people who unlawfully overstayed their visa. Our system should immediately remove and bar those who are knowingly evading our laws while administering fines, warnings, and other lesser penalties for overstayers whose infractions were brief and unintentional.

## A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR A SMALL BUSINESSES.

Recruiting just one employee from abroad can cost a business hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees, legal help, and compliance costs. While large firms have the resources to absorb these expenses, family farms, start-ups, and other small businesses need a simplified process so they are not priced out of their own immigration system.



## REDUCE ADMINISTRATIVE WASTE WITH GREATER INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.

Both employers and immigrants need to have confidence that the standards of legal immigration are consistent. The Departments of Labor, State, and Homeland Security often request identical information from applicants, yet utilize distinct standards for evaluation. This bureaucratic redundancy breeds inconsistency in results and generates unnecessary delays in the processing of applications.

The U.S. immigration system is too costly, time consuming, and unpredictable for any individual to navigate on their own. Rules should be harmonized across different agencies overseeing the process and costly regulations not required by statute should be rescinded. Under our new framework, well-meaning people will follow our laws and offenders will be penalized.



# PILLAR FOUR

Transparency, Accountability, and Due Process.

Americans for Prosperity believes that immigration can be a win-win for everyone. Businesses struggling to find enough employees and immigrants in pursuit of opportunity should have a clear and efficient legal immigration process to follow. Meanwhile, the government has a responsibility to maintain confidence in the system by increasing transparency and being accountable to its own standards.



## STRONGER REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

The Department of Homeland Security should share monthly data regarding the number of got-aways, give-ups, and apprehensions of those on the Terrorist Screening Database.

## DUE PROCESS & EFFICIENCY.

We must ensure that immigrants are afforded a fair chance to obtain lawful status, and that adjudicators are given the tools to more expediently process cases. This entails initial eligibility screenings to prevent abuse of the system, as well as efficient adjudication to ensure that meritorious cases are quickly granted, and weak or frivolous cases are quickly denied.



To ensure the safety of American citizens, the Department of Homeland Security must freely and frequently share data on got-aways, apprehended individuals on the Terrorist Screening Database, and giveups. It is equally important to uphold due process for immigrants, while also ensuring that our system isn't abused and our backlogs don't become even more unmanageable.





# THE NORTHERN BORDER

This is the longest international border in the world. With increasing law enforcement attention dedicated to the southern border, we should be cognizant that some illicit activity will be diverted north.

Despite rising pressure on states across the northern border, U.S. Border Patrol staffing has remained constant for 14+ years.

---

The Northern Border cannot be forgotten. In the Spring of 2023, Rep. Mike Kelly (PA) and Rep. Ryan Zinke (MT) launched the Northern Border Security Caucus to combat narcotrafficking and terrorists crossing from Canada into the United States. The Four Pillars framework for border security and immigration reform complements the important work of the caucus. AFP recognizes that trade between Canada and the United States is vital to the economies of northern border states. It is critical to protect that by keeping out those who wish to exploit gaps in our northern border.

The Four Pillars framework addresses these vulnerabilities while strengthening the strong economic ties between our two countries. AFP wants to incentivize and reward lawful behavior and penalize those who violate our northern border.





[AMERICANSFORPROSPERITY.ORG](http://AMERICANSFORPROSPERITY.ORG)