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Introduction

Most Americans agree that legal, limited, and controlled immigration is of benefit to our economy and society. Conversely, it seems certain that the unprecedented, mass release of otherwise inadmissible aliens at the U.S. border since President Biden took office has had a deleterious impact, spreading from the immediate vicinity of the border to states and cities far inland.

Before discussing some of these effects, one should understand how we got here.

According to U.S. law, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is supposed to detain all inadmissible aliens—that is, foreign nationals without visas allowing them to request admission at a U.S. port of entry—who enter the country illegally between ports of entry. Illegal immigrants detained pending removal proceedings have a high chance of being deported, while those released are likely to remain indefinitely.¹ At various times in the past, DHS has responded to surges in the number of illegal aliens encountered at the border by releasing them on their own recognizance, having placed them in removal proceedings under U.S. immigration law.² Since January 2021, this

¹ Nadwa Mossaad, Sean Leong, Ryan Baugh, and Marc Rosenblum, “Fiscal Year 2021 Enforcement Lifecycle Report,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, November 2022, p. 13, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/2022_1114_plcy_enforcement_lifecycle_report_fy2021.pdf (accessed October 16, 2023).

² Title 8 U.S. Code, Aliens and Nationality, <https://uscode.house.gov/browse/&edition=prelim> (accessed October 16, 2023).

formerly expedient and temporary tactic has become the strategic norm and has reached epic proportions. President Biden has added to the mass release policy by using the limited parole power in the Immigration and Nationality Act at an unprecedented scale and not for intended purposes.³

From Deter, Detain, and Deport to Process, Parole, and Punt

The Biden Administration claims that today’s mass immigration is the result of unprecedented geopolitical and environmental circumstances.⁴ Their solution is, first, to use foreign aid and assistance programs to reduce the “root causes” of immigration in Latin America and then, while waiting for results, to replace the traditional border control model of deterrence, detention, and deportation of illegal crossers by creating what they call “lawful pathways” to allow “safe, orderly, and humane” entry of illegal immigrants and allowing them to apply for asylum protection thereafter. The result has been predictable: The easier it appears to be to enter the U.S. and be allowed to remain and work, the more people come. DHS has reported over 150,000 people at the border every month attempting to enter the U.S. illegally since January 2021. August 2023 saw over 304,000 encounters, the highest one-month total in U.S. history. September figures are almost certain to exceed it.

The Biden Administration’s “root causes” approach has not reduced illegal immigration flows as allegedly intended. Meanwhile, having fought to eliminate their own ability to remove illegal crossers expeditiously for public health reasons under Title 42, they came up with a “Comprehensive Plan to Manage the Border After Title 42.”⁵ The intention of the Rule was to expedite the removal of those who were less likely to qualify for asylum and who had not taken advantage of the Administration’s new parole programs using the CBP One application. However, as was widely predicted from the beginning, the Rule’s wide exceptions, including for families and certain nationalities, have made it nearly useless. Even with the new Rule’s demonstrable failure to reduce the flow of inadmissible aliens crossing the border, the Administration’s default position remained to let in as many aliens as could be processed and nominally put them into the backlogged asylum system. In most cases, illegal border crossers were released without any way to track them or ensure that they attended scheduled court appearances.⁶

In addition to this “catch and release” standard, the Administration has redirected tens of thousands of illegal aliens whom the Border Patrol would have “encountered”—that is, administratively arrested—crossing between ports of entry by inventing and expanding programs to

³ *Texas et al v. Biden*, Case 6:23-cv-00007, United States District Court, Southern District of Texas, Victoria Division, Filed January 24, 2023.

⁴ “Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection,” The White House, June 10, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/10/los-angeles-declaration-on-migration-and-protection/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

⁵ “Fact Sheet: Biden–Harris Administration Announces New Border Enforcement Actions,” The White House, January 5, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/01/05/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-new-border-enforcement-actions/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

⁶ Simon Hankinson, “‘Alternatives to Detention’ for Illegal Aliens: Effective with Mandatory Tracking for Entire Process,” Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 3767, May 12, 2023, https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/BG3767_0.pdf.

allow inadmissible aliens to enter the United States on immigration parole.⁷ They are paroled on the premise that they are refugees fleeing persecution who will apply for asylum rather than economic migrants. The Administration has provided mass, class-wide parole programs for nationals of Afghanistan, Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela and additional “family reunification” parole for beneficiaries of immediate relative immigrant visa petitions from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, or Honduras and their immediate family members.⁸ Over 50,000 more otherwise inadmissible aliens are now being welcomed every month into the country at air and land entry points by inspectors with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Field Operations.

The White House continues to maintain that mass release at the border and invented “lawful pathways” using parole are necessary “unless Congress comes together in a bipartisan way to address our broken immigration and asylum system.”⁹ However, what they appear to mean by “broken” is that the current laws do not admit the number of people they want, and by “address” they seek a mass amnesty for those living here illegally, which would inspire millions more to enter illegally in the hope of benefiting in the future.

The Costs of Illegal Immigration in 2023

Legal immigration is the tradition and lifeblood of the United States, and most Americans support a reasonable amount of it annually. Illegal immigration has always occurred along with legal, but in the past two years, it has increased to levels that are both unprecedented and deleterious to the country as a whole.

I submit that there are five major ways in which illegal immigration hurts America.

Equity and Sovereignty. Allowing most illegal border crossers to enter and remain in the country, often on the basis of parole or before they are even placed into removal proceedings, undermines both the rule of law and our national sovereignty. Millions of foreign nationals, relatives of U.S. citizens, prospective investors, and skilled workers wait patiently in the orderly if slow process Congress has legislated and funded. To see millions of people—in just a few years—short-circuit this process and enjoy all the advantages of being a legal immigrant without any fee, wait, background check, or legal right sends the message abroad that breaking our laws will be rewarded. U.S. citizenship must have a value over non-citizenship, or the bonds of duty between government and governed will wither.

The abuse of parole by the Biden Administration also tests the separation of powers under the U.S. Constitution, which gives Congress the prerogative to decide who enters the country and on

⁷ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans,” last reviewed/updated September 20, 2023, <https://www.uscis.gov/CHNV> (accessed October 16, 2023).

⁸ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Family Reunification Parole Processes,” last reviewed/updated October 3, 2023, <https://www.uscis.gov/FRP> (accessed October 16, 2023).

⁹ Press release, “Border Encounters Remain Low as Biden-Harris Administration’s Comprehensive Plan to Manage the Border After Title 42 in Effect,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, June 6, 2023, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/06/06/border-encounters-remain-low-biden-harris-administrations-comprehensive-plan-manage#:~:text=Until%20and%20unless%20Congress%20comes,in%20migration%20at%20our%20border> (accessed October 16, 2023).

what terms. Immigration must be in the national interest, not just the political interest of each successive presidential Administration.

Economic. Open borders are fundamentally incompatible with a modern welfare state. One credible estimate is that illegal immigration costs \$150 billion a year. The societal costs are difficult to calculate.

Education. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of illegal alien families with children that have been allowed into the U.S. since January 2021, over 400,000 unaccompanied alien children (UACs) have also been released into the custody of family, guardians, or “sponsors.” Most will be attending school at taxpayer expense. Public schools are required to provide a free education to children who are residing in the United States illegally.¹⁰ There were around 4.8 million public school students in 2020, 6.5 percent of whom were either illegal aliens or the children of illegal aliens. Overall, federal and state funding for these children is estimated to cost around \$78 billion annually.

In addition, 5.1 million, or 10 percent, of all students in public schools have limited English proficiency (LEP). Because the federal government provides 7.9 percent of total public-school funding but only 1 percent of the cost for LEP students, the additional cost of specialist teachers for LEP falls on states and localities.¹¹

Crime. In the past two and a half years, the United States has allowed millions of people to enter the country who tend to be younger, more male, and more uneducated than the national population as a whole. Because many of those caught and released at the border do not provide identification documents to DHS when they are processed into the country, we have no way to know whether they have criminal records in their home countries or countries they have lived in or passed through on the way to our border. Even if inadmissible aliens do provide valid identification, DHS does not have access to the criminal records of most of these countries—assuming, of course, that such records exist in the first place. Thus, we have no real criminal vetting on any released illegal immigrant unless he or she has a record in the United States.

Based on per-country estimates of criminal activity per given population, we are probably letting in dozens of thieves,¹² a few murderers and rapists,¹³ and a dozen with suspected terrorist links¹⁴ every month along with the majority who are simply economic migrants looking to improve

¹⁰ *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982), <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/457/202/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

¹¹ Federation for American Immigration Reform, “The Elephant in the Classroom: Mass Immigration Imposing Colossal Cost and Challenges on Public Education,” *Research Report*, September 2022, https://www.fairus.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/FAIR%20Education%20Report%20Sept%202022_1.pdf (accessed October 16, 2023).

¹² USA Facts, “Property Crime Rate (per 100,000 Persons),” <https://usafacts.org/data/topics/security-safety/crime-and-justice/crime-and-police/property-crime-rate-per-100000-persons/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

¹³ Wisevoter, “Crime Rate by Country,” <https://wisevoter.com/country-rankings/crime-rate-by-country/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

¹⁴ Julia Ainsley, “Number of people on terrorist watchlist stopped at southern U.S. border has risen,” NBC News, September 14, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/number-people-terror-watchlist-stopped-mexico-us-border-risen-rcna105095> (accessed October 16, 2023).

their lot. We find out sooner or later, as criminals tend to reoffend. A significant amount of crime is committed by a fairly small percentage of the population,¹⁵ often geographically concentrated in areas of our large cities. As Rafael Mangual writes, “the vast majority of American prisoners are violent, chronic offenders.”¹⁶

Mass release at the border results in preventable crimes. Secretary Mayorkas’s instructions to Immigration and Customs Enforcement to limit interior enforcement¹⁷ has significantly reduced arrest, detention, and deportation levels from prior years. There are more than 400,000 convicted illegal alien criminals free in our communities. The Biden Administration’s annual target for deporting them is under 30,000.¹⁸ President Biden thus asks Americans—not their home countries—to run the risks posed by recidivist foreign criminals. The steady stream of arrests by local and federal authorities of recidivist foreign criminals, often previously deported once or more than once, makes it clear: The ease with which aliens can cross the border undetected makes our entire country less safe.

Health Care. Total federal medical expenditures related to illegal aliens are estimated at \$23 billion this year. That is a combination of uncompensated federal hospital expenditures, Medicaid births, Medicaid fraud, and Medicaid for U.S.-born children of illegal aliens. The Medicaid costs for emergency medical services for illegal aliens went from roughly \$3 billion in FY 2020 to over \$7 billion in FY 2021.¹⁹ States like Illinois and New York that have large illegal populations have attempted to provide Medicaid for illegal alien seniors, causing their costs to balloon beyond initial estimates.

Cost by State and City

The border cities are hit by wave after wave of illegal immigrants released when DHS capacity is overwhelmed. In El Paso, Texas, twice in the past year, hundreds of released aliens have slept in the streets due to full shelters. Although the border bears the brunt of the initial crossings, the long-term costs mostly move further north.

In Chicago, there were over 400 illegal immigrants sleeping at O’Hare Airport as of early October. The city had received 10,000 migrants to add to its own homeless population, overwhelming shelter capacity. Chicago has spent over \$250 million this year to support illegal

¹⁵ Rafael A. Mangual, *Criminal (In)Justice: What the Push for Decarceration and Depolicing Gets Wrong and Who It Hurts the Most* (New York: Center Street/Hachette, 2022).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷ Memorandum from Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to Tae D. Johnson, Acting Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, et al., “Subject: Guidelines for the Enforcement of Civil Immigration Law,” September 30, 2021, <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/news/guidelines-civilimmigrationlaw.pdf> (accessed October 16, 2023).

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Budget Overview Fiscal Year 2024, Congressional Justification*, p. 161, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/U.S.%20IMMIGRATION%20AND%20CUSTOMS%20ENFORCEMENT_Remediated.pdf (accessed October 16, 2023).

¹⁹ “Causes, Costs, and Consequences: Why Secretary Mayorkas Must be Investigated for His Border Crisis,” Committee on Homeland Security, Majority Report, June 14, 2023, <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CHSPreliminaryReport.pdf> (accessed October 16, 2023).

immigrants. City residents have complained about the use of schools as migrant shelters and about the disruptive and criminal behavior of some of the illegal aliens housed by the city.²⁰

New York City receives hundreds of illegal alien arrivals a week, adding to at least 120,000 who have arrived in the past two years. New York will spend more than \$5 billion housing illegal aliens in FY 2023, equaling the annual budget of the Fire, Parks, and Sanitation Departments combined. Mayor Adams has rented hundreds of hotels and opened dozens of emergency facilities from churches to parking lots to house illegal aliens.²¹ He has tried to pay private homeowners to house them,²² has handed out flyers at the border to dissuade them from coming, and in October went to visit countries in Latin America to try to stem the flow, but to no avail. With the federal government releasing nearly every illegal alien at the border as long as he or she is part of a family unit, and with New York's provision of free health care, food, schools, legal counsel, and even bicycles, there is no conceivable end to New York's liability without deliberate policy changes from the White House.²³

Washington, D.C.'s mayor has complained that the city's shelters for migrant families are full.²⁴ By September, the city had already spent \$55.8 million to house illegal immigrants in 2023, not including costs of education and health care. In New Jersey, the Biden Administration proposed sending illegal aliens from New York to Atlantic City International Airport.²⁵ In Massachusetts, the governor has deployed over 2,000 members of the National Guard to help process arriving illegal immigrants and help them apply for work permits. Massachusetts is spending \$45 million a month to shelter illegal immigrants in hotels and, like New York, has asked local people to house them.

Environmental Costs

A year ago, I visited Yuma, Arizona, to see for myself how easy it was for foreign nationals to cross illegally into the United States on foot. I spoke to local Americans, including farmers and ranchers, about the impact of large numbers of these people on their land. In the early months of the Biden Administration, illegal immigrants were walking through and camping in agricultural fields in Yuma, which produces 90 percent of U.S. salad and leafy greens from November to April. Because of strict food safety regulations, each human trace requires farmers to destroy all the crops in a given

²⁰ Kristine Parks, "Chicago residents sound off on illegal immigrants in neighborhood: 'They disrespect us, rob us, harass us,'" Fox News, July 28, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/chicago-residents-sound-off-illegal-immigrants-neighborhood-disrespect-rob-harass> (accessed October 16, 2023).

²¹ Carl Campanile, "Mayor Eric Adams eyes Aqueduct Racetrack, Creedmoor Center for new NYC migrant tent cities," *New York Post*, July 16, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/07/16/eric-adams-eyes-aqueduct-racetrack-creedmoor-center-for-new-nyc-migrant-tent-cities/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

²² Haley Brown, Bernadette Hogan, and Emily Crane, "Adams floats idea of New Yorkers housing migrants in 'private residences,'" *New York Post*, June 5, 2023, <https://nypost.com/2023/06/05/adams-wants-new-yorkers-to-house-migrants-in-private-residences/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

²³ Lionel Shriver, "The problem with hotels for migrants," *The Spectator World*, August 1, 2023, <https://thespectator.com/topic/problem-hotels-migrants-new-york-britain/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

²⁴ Héctor Alejandro Arzate, "D.C. Has Reached Hotel Capacity for Newly Arrived Migrants," WAMU DCist, May 3, 2023, <https://dcist.com/story/23/05/03/dc-migrants-hotel-capacity/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

²⁵ Jake Smith, "'Wild West': Dem Gov Sounds Alarm Over Massive Influx Of Illegal Migrants," Daily Caller, September 1, 2023, <https://dailycaller.com/2023/09/01/new-jersey-illegal-migrants-phil-murphy/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

radius from any perceived human contamination, from mere footprints to feces and menstrual pads, causing millions of dollars in uninsured losses.

In March, I visited a gap in the unfinished border wall near the Morelos Dam in Yuma. At about 20 yards wide, it was supposed to be a vehicle gate when finished. President Biden ordered all work on the wall to stop shortly after taking office. Ever since, the Morelos Gap has been one of the most popular places for foreigners to enter the U.S. illegally on foot. It is one of many places in Arizona where the border is, for most intents and purposes, wide open. People of unknown identity from anywhere in the world can simply walk up and come in. Under Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas, the illegal arrivals are met by the Border Patrol or whatever DHS elements are available and channeled into a system that is designed to get them into the interior of the United States as fast as possible. Diverting DHS staff, including Border Patrol, from regular duty to providing administrative and social services leaves the border less guarded than usual, allowing even more illegal drugs, people, and goods into the country.

I visited the Morelos Gap during the day and again at 3:00 a.m. During the day, I saw clear signs of mass migration. In a few minutes looking in the sand, I gleaned coins from Mexico, Peru, and the Republic of Georgia. I picked up a passport from Cuba, debit cards from Mexico and Turkey, several Peruvian national identity cards, a Mexican refugee card belonging to an Ecuadorian, and a Polish bank card belonging to an Indian. Worldwide awareness of our open border, spread by family, friends, and alien smuggling criminals using social media, is the real “root cause” of the mass rush to the border since January 2021 according to journalists who have spoken with prospective illegal immigrants to the U.S. from many countries along the Panama–Mexico route.²⁶

At 3:00 a.m., I witnessed more than 100 people walking or running through the Gap to join a long line to be “processed.” Border Patrol took their photos, starting the process that in most cases would have ended with their release into the U.S. interior a few days later. At one time or another, I have learned and spoken French, Slovak, Hindi, and Spanish in descending order of ability. That night, I spoke to people from Cameroon, China, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Georgia, India, and Russia. When asked, the people in line told me they were here to look for work and opportunity. As a former consular officer who has interviewed thousands of visa applicants, it was surreal to see the same type of aspiring economic immigrants I had interviewed (and usually denied visas to) in embassies overseas now lining up for easier entry into the U.S. They get in with no application, no fee, no criminal background check, and none of the other inconveniences of having to qualify for a visa as our law requires before asking to be admitted into the United States.

After Yuma, I rode along with a Pinal County, Arizona, police officer in an area a few hours to the east. He showed us many spots where smugglers hide out with drugs and illegal migrants, waiting for their ride after trekking through the desert from the border. Illegal immigrants discard piles of carpet slippers (to hide footprints), backpacks, and plastic water jugs, thousands of which litter the fragile desert landscape. Those surrendering to Border Patrol are then placed in federally funded housing with sanitary facilities, but those attempting to evade detection on entry—informally called “gotaways”—defecate and litter all along their trail into the United States until being picked up by smugglers’ vehicles or disappearing into towns and cities. Last May, a thousand or so illegal

²⁶ Todd Bensman, *Overrun: How Joe Biden Unleashed the Greatest Border Crisis in U.S. History* (Nashville: Bombardier Books, 2023).

border crossers built a camp in California’s Jacumba Hot Springs, an “arid wilderness,” while waiting for their free ride to be processed and released into the U.S. with a ticket to their favored destination. They came from Colombia, Brazil, Peru, India, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, and other countries. *The New York Times* reported that the migrants cut tree branches to make shelters and burn as firewood.²⁷

According to a report by the Center for Immigration Studies, each alien crossing illegally into the United States leaves behind six to eight pounds of trash on the U.S. side of the border. Taking into account the more than 7 million people who have crossed the border illegally in the past few years, that amounts to millions of pounds per year.²⁸ Between 2007 and 2018, the State of Arizona collected 460,000 pounds of trash discarded by illegal aliens along its 370-mile border with Mexico.²⁹ As I have seen for myself in visits to Arizona, the Rio Grande Valley, and areas of southern Texas used by alien smugglers, the landscape is littered with personal belongings like backpacks, clothes, and documents; prescription drugs; water bottles; and other detritus left by illegal immigrants.³⁰

The human waste and trash produced by the endless foot traffic not only pollutes crops, but also harms wildlife, taints water, and damages delicate desert environments. There are 693 miles of federal or tribally owned land along the U.S. border with Mexico.³¹ This includes ranches and farms, Indian reservations, and protected areas such as the Sonoran Desert National Monument, Big Bend National Park, and Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Mass illegal immigration exacerbates the environmental impact on these areas.³²

Federal lands are held in trust for the American people by the government. Almost 20 years ago, the manager of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge south of Tucson, Arizona, said his staff spent over a third of their time installing protective measures and mitigating damage from illegal border crossers and alien smugglers while “biologists spen[t] precious time documenting and mitigating resource damage.” According to the Fish and Wildlife official’s testimony, similar damage was being done in other federal land along the border.³³ Given the current mass illegal

²⁷ Soumya Karlamangla, “Scenes from a Migrant Camp at California’s Southern Border,” *The New York Times*, May 19, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/19/us/migrants-title-42-jacumba-hot-springs.html> (accessed October 16, 2023).

²⁸ Hannah Davis, “Leftist Hypocrisy: Failing to Criticize Environmental Disaster of Biden’s Open Border,” Heritage Foundation Commentary, June 6, 2023, <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/commentary/leftist-hypocrisy-failing-criticize-environmental-disaster-bidens-open>.

²⁹ Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, “Arizona Border Trash,” <https://legacy.azdeq.gov/obep/waste.html> (accessed October 16, 2023).

³⁰ Simon Hankinson, “I Couldn’t Believe What I Saw at Biden’s Lawless Open Border,” *The Federalist*, March 31, 2023, <https://thefederalist.com/2023/03/31/i-couldnt-believe-what-i-saw-at-bidens-lawless-open-border/> (accessed October 16, 2023).

³¹ Memorandum to House Committee on Natural Resources Republican Members from Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Republican Staff; Sang Yi and Meghan Holland, “Subject: Republican Forum titled ‘The Biden Border Crisis: Environmental and Humanitarian Consequences,’” May 24, 2021, https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2021-05-27_oi_border_forum_memo.pdf (accessed October 16, 2023).

³² Davis, “Leftist Hypocrisy: Failing to Criticize Environmental Disaster of Biden’s Open Border.”

³³ Mitch Ellis, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, “The Impacts of Illegal Immigration on Public Lands,” statement before the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of

migration at the border, it seems unlikely that the percentage of time that Department of the Interior staff spend mitigating the damage to federal lands caused by illegal immigrants and smugglers has decreased.

The millions of inadmissible aliens who have been released by DHS or who have been able to enter the United States illegally without detection over the past two years will add to the stress on our already depleted and stressed infrastructure: from roads to schools to hospitals to housing. By recklessly increasing the population in short periods, we can expect more urban sprawl, conversion of farmland to housing, and reduction of natural habitat. According to the National Wildlife Federation, the “rapid consumption of land could threaten the survival of nearly one out of every three imperiled species in the United States.”³⁴

Away from the border, using federal lands to house illegal aliens would fly in the face of the public benefit for which the lands were conserved, and it would fail to solve the problem. U.S. cities from El Paso to Boston are paying the price of mass illegal immigration. New York City alone is spending more than \$5 billion a year housing illegal aliens and, running out of space, has apparently arranged to lease federal land to house migrants.

Local officials have explained the difficulties of managing this particular facility,³⁵ but I would argue more broadly that using federal lands anywhere for the purpose of housing illegal immigrants would be a mistake. With no federal effort to control the flow from the south, there would be no predictable end to the period during which local people would be deprived of recreation areas for which they paid taxes. Reports from Guatemala to the Darien Gap indicate that mass migration facilitated by this Administration is only going to grow.³⁶

Absent a change in national policy, U.S. localities are going to have to deal with increasing flows for at least another year. They will ask Washington to compensate them for the costs, but there are no guarantees that money will be provided. This will leave cities and states stuck with semi-permanent encampments and no revenue for their maintenance.

Representatives, June 15, 2006, <https://fws.gov/testimony/impacts-illegal-immigration-public-lands> (accessed October 16, 2023).

³⁴ Reid Ewing and John Kostyack, *Endangered by Sprawl: How Runaway Development Threatens America's Wildlife*, National Wildlife Federation, Smart Growth America, and NatureServe, 2005, <https://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Wildlife/EndangeredbySprawl.pdf> (accessed October 16, 2023).

³⁵ Kenneth Spencer, “Destroying America’s Best Idea: Examining the Biden Administration’s Use of National Park Service Lands for Migrant Camps,” statement before the Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives, September 27, 2023, https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_spencer.pdf (accessed October 16, 2023).

³⁶ Mary Anastasia O’Grady, “How Colombia Abets the Migrant Crisis: A jungle smuggling operation could bring 500,000 aliens into Panama in 2023—and later into the U.S.,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-colombia-abets-the-migrant-crisis-illegal-immigration-border-international-e376978> (accessed October 16, 2023).

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