

# Can We Finally Agree that Sanctuary Cities are a Failed Experiment?

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Since its founding, America has had a leg up on other countries because of its willingness to think boldly and try new things. This was summed up by Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, who in 1932 [described](#) how “a single courageous state may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory, and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.” From that was born the idea of states as “laboratories of democracy,” a practice that continues today.

For several decades, a collection of progressive states, counties and cities have conducted an experiment called sanctuary policies. Based on a preponderance of evidence, especially in the last few years, it is time to declare America’s experiment with sanctuary policies to be a complete failure and seek a better way.

The theory must have sounded great when articulated in the faculty lounges of places like Oberlin and Columbia. The idea of defying federal immigration law and shielding those here illegally from consequences no doubt stroked the egos of intellectuals who see themselves as having superior levels of compassion and charity. Those opposed to the idea were dismissed as captive to the darker human instinct towards “otherism” and xenophobia.

As is often the case, however, theory and reality are two very different things. Sanctuary policies in practice have been a disaster, resulting in overcrowding, more crime, maxed out city budgets and unbearable tension in the communities where they are practiced.

New York City has become the cautionary tale for this failure. City leaders long thought that, by its sheer size, resources and welcoming spirit, Gotham could absorb the additional illegal alien arrivals who would be drawn to the city’s permissive atmosphere.

That all changed in the summer of 2022, when the governors of Texas and Florida sent busloads of aliens to New York. Within weeks the city was on its knees, forcing Mayor Eric Adams, a supporter of sanctuary policies, to beg the White House for a financial bailout. He also pressured, then [sued](#), upstate, non-sanctuary New York communities to accept his city’s overflow.

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In short, it was a complete repudiation of sanctuary policies, as well as the tiresome bumper sticker line that “Immigrants make communities stronger.” Would anyone argue that New York is stronger today as a result of its sanctuary policies? On the contrary, it has never looked weaker.

Even before the full impact of the migrant influx to the city last summer, the Immigration Reform Law Institute named New York City as the [most dangerous](#) sanctuary community in America.

The situation is not much better in Chicago, which, like New York, dove head first into sanctuary madness. The policy has resulted in scenes of migrants [sleeping on the floor](#) *en masse* in police stations and fights breaking out at overcrowded shelters. Conditions there as a result of the border stampede have gotten so bad that Alderman Raymond Lopez, a Democrat, is [calling](#) for the city to end its sanctuary policy.

Seeing this sad spectacle, some may argue that the residents of those cities got the policies they voted for. That is true, and fulfills the “if its citizens choose” portion of the laboratories of democracy quote from Justice Brandeis.

However, there is increasing evidence of buyers’ remorse from those residents. A [recent poll](#) of New Yorkers found that 82 percent of Empire State voters said the flow of migrants to the state is a serious problem. Fifty-eight percent said that New Yorkers have already done enough for new migrants and should now work to slow the flow of migrants to New York. For a deep blue state like New York, this is what is known as a sea change of public opinion.

There is a similar tone in Chicago, where town hall meetings have erupted with angry residents [venting](#) their frustrations at city officials over the mess that sanctuary laws have produced in their city.

Much like how banks undergo stress tests to measure their stability, the Biden-caused border crisis has been a chance for America’s sanctuary cities to match their rhetoric with results, and they have failed miserably. Whatever the intentions behind them, sanctuary policies are doomed to produce horrible outcomes wherever they are implemented.

Like the residents of New York and Chicago, the rest of America must stand and tell their elected leaders that this failed experiment is over.

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