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# Business groups quietly push back on Trump's immigration raids



Brittany Gibson, Marc Caputo



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Business groups are quietly urging the [Trump administration](#) to ease up on its plans for immigration raids in workplaces, but the White House is resisting.

**Why it matters:** So far, the pace of workplace raids doesn't appear to have increased under President Trump compared to the Biden administration's efforts. But aggressive [shows of enforcement](#) are key to Trump's plans to crackdown on illegal immigration.

**Zoom in:** Just the threat of more raids has rattled several industries — such as [construction and agriculture](#) — that rely on immigrant labor, not all of it legal.

- "Rumors of raids are having more impact at this point than raids themselves," said Brian Turmail, vice president of public affairs and workforce for the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC).
- Two agriculture industry group leaders echoed that sentiment. Concerns about raids have led some workers to walk off job sites early or not show up at all, they said.
- "It's a question of, where are we being prioritized" in the immigration crackdown, said one of the agriculture industry group leaders, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the immigration issue. "I think there's a lot of uncertainty" about that.

**The big picture:** Trump's team and other Republican leaders are betting that a crackdown on immigrants not authorized to work in the U.S. will open up jobs for Americans and legal residents, and raise wages among working-class voters, who've drifted toward the GOP in recent elections.

- In doing so, the administration is bucking some of the GOP's traditional supporters in the business community.
- Americans "overwhelmingly voted for decisive action on the border and those here illegally," said Chris LaCivita, a Trump campaign co-manager who's now a senior adviser at Building America's Future, a group that supports Trump initiatives. "No amount of lobbying from certain business sectors will change what the new GOP and President Trump are determined to implement."
- "Republicans are making a big switch, a lot of them," a former Trump administration official said. They're "recognizing that the American worker is not happy, and they're justified in not being happy."

**Critics see the White House's plan** as leading to an exodus of workers in jobs that many Americans don't want to do, resulting in lower productivity, higher prices and a damaged economy.

- "The long-term impact will be where housing prices are already too high in places like Arizona," said Sen. Mark Kelly (D-Ariz.). "When they can't get the workforce to build the houses, the prices are going to go up and rents are going to go up."
- "We've been told why Americans don't do" certain jobs, said immigration attorney Patricia Gannon, who used to work for the Immigration and Naturalization Service. "We may not like the answers."

**By the numbers:** Undocumented workers and those with expired work visas can be difficult to track across sectors of the economy, but some studies have given a glimpse of their presence.

- The [American Immigration Council](#) estimates that about 4.6% of the employed labor force are undocumented immigrants.

- A recent [Department of Agriculture](#) study estimated that about 42% of America's farmworkers were undocumented from 2020 to 2022.
- About a quarter of construction workers across the U.S. may be undocumented, according to the [National Immigration Forum](#), an immigration advocacy group.

**Sen. Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio)** told Axios he's heard from companies in his state concerned about worksite raids.

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- " 'Don't hire illegals' should be your statement," Moreno said he told one business association when it asked him what it should say about the situation.
- "Migrants are ... fleeing terrible situations," Moreno said. "But it's the companies that are hiring that need to have some sort of ramifications."

**The intrigue:** Trump's immigration plans have sparked increased lobbying on the issue. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the nation's largest lobbying organization, recently filed a government disclosure that offered hints at its work on immigration.

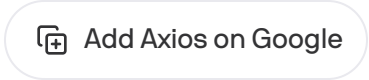
- The chamber didn't respond to an interview request and didn't list specific policies it's lobbying on in its February report.
- But a more detailed filing for the last quarter of 2024 showed the chamber lobbied on "high-skilled" immigrants, "less-skilled" immigrants, various immigration visa categories and several immigration-related bills.
- Other industry groups, including the AGC, are pushing for protections for their labor force, including more visas for foreign workers and more trade school trainings to hire Americans.

**What they're saying:** "[Pennsylvania Democratic Sen.] John Fetterman would have a better chance of convincing Trump to do something for the business community than the chamber," said one Republican lobbyist, who currently doesn't have a client focused on immigration.

- "The chamber represents the Nikki Haley-establishment, Paul Ryan-, Mitch McConnell-wing of the party, which is dead and buried at this point," the lobbyist added.
- "Businesses that human traffic and exploit migrants for cheap labor should be afraid: We will go after them," said Tricia McLaughlin, assistant secretary for public affairs at the Department of Homeland Security.
- "As for law-abiding companies, the media is intentionally manufacturing fear," she added. "If there was any correlation between rampant illegal immigration and a good economy, Biden would have had a booming economy."

**Many Democrats** have backed detaining and removing criminals who are in the U.S. without authorization, but don't support Trump's plans.

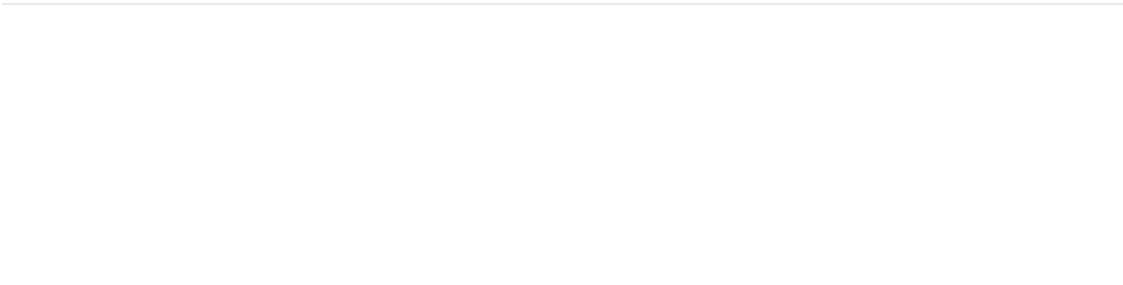
- "Mass deportations," Kelly said, "are designed to scare people. We need to deport criminals."



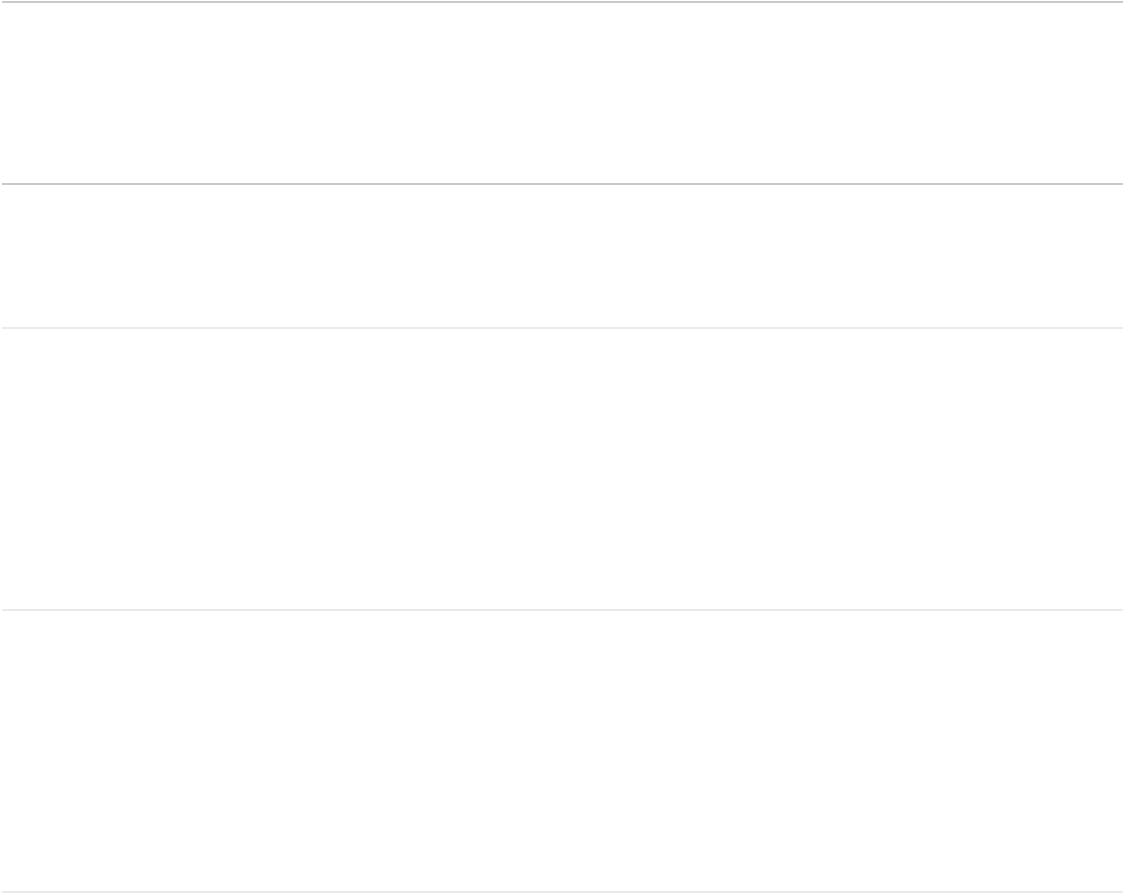
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