



Central American Minors Refugee/Parole Program Funds Deportees' Return

As we observed in an [April 2 article](#), U.S.  Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), working in coordination with the U.S. State Department (DOS), conducted a teleconference on March 31 to provide information about its Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee/Parole Program. The CAM program began accepting applications from “qualifying parents” in the United States for their children still living in Central America on December 1, 2014.

An article about the program on the State Department’s website notes that it was set up in “El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to provide a safe, legal, and orderly alternative to the dangerous journey that some children are currently undertaking to the United States.”

The undeniably “dangerous journey” referred to was the long trip from Central America through Mexico to the U.S. border that an estimated 60,000 Unaccompanied Children (UACs) took during the first six months of 2014, up from about 6,000 in 2011. Most of the children who came here illegally were not deported immediately back to their country of origin because the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 — enacted to prevent victims of child trafficking from being automatically sent back to those who had effectively enslaved them — required that children entering our country illegally be granted a court appearance to allow a judge to evaluate their particular situation.

However, the massive increase in the numbers of such UACs clogged the immigration courts, and many hearings were postponed for years. In the meantime, pending the hearings, the children were housed in camps and eventually resettled in sponsor homes around the country.

In evaluating the reasons why the flow of illegal immigrants (including UACs) had increased so dramatically, conservatives were outspoken, including Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) who posted a statement about the crisis on his Senate webpage on June 3, 2014 that read, in part:

The rising crisis at the border is the direct and predictable result of actions taken by President Obama. He and his Administration have announced to the world that they will not enforce America’s immigration laws, and have emphasized in particular that foreign youth will be exempted from these laws. The world has heard the President’s call, and illegal immigrants are pouring across the border in pursuit of his promised amnesty.

More surprisingly however, a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) report leaked to Breitbart Texas last year by a law-enforcement source in DHS who wanted to remain unidentified blamed the failure to deport those who have entered the United States illegally as among the “pull factors” prompting more people to follow suit. The DHS report noted:

Migration pull factors include reunification with family members already in the United States and



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successful migration attempts; that is, most (98 percent) OTM [other than Mexican] UCs [unaccompanied children] are issued a Notice to Appear and not immediately removed from the United States. Last year, only 1,700 UCs were repatriated to their home countries.

The report acknowledged that the failure to immediately deport (repatriate) illegal immigrants is a key factor in encouraging further illegal immigration:

Several factors combine to cause this, including poor economies and violence in home countries, potential employment opportunities in the United States, family reunification, and success at not being immediately repatriated drive OTM UC migration to the United States.

Instead of eliminating a major factor drawing tens of thousands of Central American youths to the U.S. border — our lack of enforcement and deportation of illegal aliens — our State Department and USCIS have decided simply to legalize immigration that was previously illegal.

Following a summit meeting of three Central American presidents held last November 14, Vice President Biden announced that the Departments of State and Homeland Security (DHS, of which USCIS is a component) would establish a refugee resettlement program to enable minors to seek refugee and parole status in the United States. And so, the CAM Program was born.

There is also an internationalist aspect to the program. Writing for the Brookings Institution last November 20, Diana Villiers Negroponte — a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) — noted: “In the three Central American countries, the UN’s International Organization for Migration will manage the process by contacting each child and inviting them to a pre-screening interview.”

But the story gets even worse. An article posted by *National Review* on April 7 notes: “The [CAM] program not only creates a pathway for Central American children to reunite with their newly amnestied parents, it also pays their travel costs and ensures them federal benefits.”

The article quoted a USCIS official who told *National Review*’s reporter during an invitation-only conference call last week: “[Previously deported aliens] are able to apply for a waiver for the inadmissibility.”

Commenting on the waivers filed by refugees previously determined to be inadmissible to the United States, the official said: “It’s the I-602 process.... The waiver authority for the refugee program is quite broad.”

During the conference call, a State Department official said applicants would not need to worry about the cost of participating in the program. “I’d just like to reiterate with this family-reunification program there is no cost other than the DNA testing that the parent must front. This program has been operational since December first and we stand by to accept more applications.”

Dan Langenkamp, identified as a State Department spokesman, told *National Review* that the Central American parolees will travel to the United States on commercial flights and be given a travel loan for the cost of the flight that they will be required to repay. “Each person is provided initial services and support by the U.S. Department of State equivalent to \$1,975,” Langenkamp wrote in an e-mail. “Additional transitional benefits are provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, as they are for other newly arrived refugees.”

Upon arrival in the United States, the CAM program parolee will be eligible for the same support provided by our government for all refugees. An article on the State Department website notes:

Approved refugees will be eligible for the same support provided to all refugees resettled in the



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United States, including assignment to a resettlement agency that will assist with reception and placement, and assistance registering children in school.

The cost of schooling, of course, will be borne by the local communities where these refugees are settled, which has become quite burdensome for many.

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