



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 30, 2014

Some in Congress Call for Refugee Status for Central American Kids

Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) and other members of Congress have called on the Obama administration to create an emergency refugee program that they assert would solve the crisis resulting from the massive surge of child immigrants coming to the United States from Central America.

McCain told Reuters on June 26 that establishing refugee application programs in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, where domestic abuse, gang violence, and poverty are overwhelming, is the “key” to defusing the exploding border crisis.



If such a plan were implemented, children could go to U.S. embassy offices in their own countries and apply for refugee status. If such status were granted, they could legally emigrate to the United States. It has not been discussed who would be responsible for supporting them once they arrived, or if U.S. government funding would be supplied to assist them.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) — who, along with McCain, was a member of the Senate’s bipartisan Gang of Eight that drafted a controversial “immigration reform” bill that included a “path to citizenship,” or amnesty, for illegal immigrants — is also considering the idea of an emergency program. “We’d be able to make a more intelligent decision about what’s legitimate and you wouldn’t have the problem of people showing up, dropped off at the door,” Graham told Reuters. “That makes sense to me.”

Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), the senior Democrat on a House Judiciary subcommittee on immigration, told Reuters that she was “surprised” that a Republican member of the House Judiciary Committee approached her last week asking to talk about establishing a refugee program for children from the three Central American countries.

Republican Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), when asked about a refugee assistance program, replied: “I wouldn’t do that.” “The more they come, the more will come. There will be hundreds of thousands,” added Shelby, who has been a vocal critic of so-called immigration reform that amounts to amnesty.

As quoted by the online Daily Caller, Jessica Vaughan, of the Center for Immigration Studies, declared, “Creating a new ‘refugee’ program would only exacerbate the problem and inspire even more families and kids to abandon their homes for a free pass to live in America.”

“Such a response also would make a mockery of our legitimate refugee program intended to aid those who are persecuted, and would strain its resources unnecessarily,” Vaughan said, noting that the Obama administration should instead focus their efforts on reuniting the youthful immigrants with their families back home.

Vaughan continued: “Instead of looking for ways to whitewash this self-inflicted policy disaster by



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characterizing it as a humanitarian crisis, the lawmakers who favor mass migration should concede that their talk of amnesty and neglect of enforcement were a mistake, and work to reverse the damage.”

This latest overture from McCain represents a departure from the relatively stronger recommendation he and Arizona’s other senator, Jeff Flake (also a Gang of Eight member), made in a June 11 letter to President Obama:

We write to urge you to send a clear message to those seeking to enter the U.S. illegally.

As you recently announced, the increasing numbers of unaccompanied children crossing the U.S. border in Texas is causing a humanitarian situation that demands a coordinated federal response. While a number of factors are influencing the nature of recent illegal crossings, the narrative of lax enforcement of our immigration laws is certainly a significant contributor.

... We urge you to use the resources at your disposal to make clear to those seeking illegal entry that current and recent illicit border crossers are not covered by and will not receive consideration of deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA). Similarly, it would be helpful if you could relay that any legislative remedy Congress approves dealing with those here illegally will surely include a requirement to have been in the country for an extended duration. For example, the immigration reform legislation approved by the Senate requires illegal aliens to have been present in the U.S. since December 31, 2011 as one of the eligibility requirements for applying for legalization. In addition, we urge you to convey to your foreign counterparts that they need to do whatever is necessary to dissuade their citizens from the dangerous strategy of crossing illegally.

While the Gang of Two correctly acknowledged that “lax enforcement of our immigration laws” is “a significant contributor” to the increasing numbers of unaccompanied children crossing the U.S. border, they offer as a better plan the Gang of Eight legislation approved by the Senate that requires illegal aliens to have been present in the United States since December 31, 2011 as “one of the eligibility requirements for applying for legalization.”

The only difference between the Gang of Eight plan and what McCain and Flake fault the Obama administration for is a matter of timing: They assert that an alien who enters our country illegally and manages to evade detection for several years should be able to “apply for legalization” (a nice term for amnesty) while those apprehended sooner should be charged and/or deported.

While stricter border enforcement would logically be a key part of stemming the problems resulting from large-scale illegal immigration, another part of the solution would be to eliminate the incentives — many of them offered by various layers of government — that entice these desperate people to endure hardships and risk danger simply to get to the borders that they cross illegally. Speaking at the November 22, 2011, GOP presidential debate, Rep. Ron Paul addressed this point:

If you subsidize something or give people incentives, you get more of it. So if you give [an] easy road to citizenship, you’re going to have more illegals. If you have a weak economy, which is understandable and we should have prevented, that’s understandable. But giving — mandating to the states and to Texas that we have to provide free medical care and free education, that’s a great burden. It’s a great burden to California and all the border states. So I would say eliminate all these benefits and talk about eliminating the welfare state because it’s detrimental not only to [those already] here but the people that come because that’s the incentive to bring their families with them.

In a statement posted on his Senate website, Ron Paul’s son, Sen. Rand Paul, indicates that he clearly



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follows in his father's footsteps, stating, in part:

I realize that subsidizing something creates more of it, and do not think the taxpayer should be forced to pay for welfare, medical care and other expenses for illegal immigrants. Once the subsidies for illegal immigration are removed, the problem will likely become far less common.

The illegal immigration crisis, especially concerning the large number of unaccompanied children crossing our borders, has correctly been described as a "humanitarian crisis." However, anything that encourages these children to trek almost 2,000 miles under adverse conditions, a journey that often makes them prey to human traffickers, is far from humanitarian. A more humanitarian approach would be to eliminate the enticing government handouts, while encouraging compassionate individuals to donate to charities that help the poor in Central America, an act that might help keep these impoverished families together, instead of separating them.

Photo of young El Salvadoran migrant: AP Images

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