

AMERICA'S VOICE

Checklist and Suggested Guidelines for Media Reporting Covering the End of Title 42

With Title 42 ending on May 11, the U.S. will no longer expel most people seeking asylum at the border because of COVID-19, which, along with other restrictions, has created a significant bottleneck for asylum seekers. The U.S. is returning to our normal asylum policies with some significant additional restrictions and barriers imposed by President Biden and some limited alternative legal channels put in place by Biden as well. There is likely to be an initial significant increase in border traffic which may take some time to settle into a new equilibrium.

Because there will be a lot of disinformation and fear-mongering, it is critical that journalists covering these developments are accurate and responsible in their reporting, do not replicate inaccurate messages and inadvertently amplify them, and avoid incendiary reporting that plays into stereotypes.

Remember, first and foremost, migrants are human beings who made an arduous journey, often fleeing for their lives. Also, the American immigration system is outdated and broken and has not been meaningfully updated since Ronald Reagan was President, with the laws not matching our needs leaving many without a route to obtain a visa.

Add Context Don't Dehumanize:

- ◆ **Protect the identities of vulnerable migrants.** If you are talking to people crossing the border, ask for the interviewee's first name to use in your reporting. Ask permission to use the individual's full name, and ask for permission before taking a photograph. Many of them are fleeing violent situations and have pending asylum cases, and you could be putting them at risk.
- ◆ **Gather context.** Seek quotes and background from the people you are interviewing about where they came from and why they left. Ask about their journey to get to the border. It is critical to tell full stories about asylum seekers—context matters.
- ◆ **Tell a full story about immigrant contributions as well as challenges.** While pictures of chaos and crisis make for good TV, they do not tell the story of immigrants or asylum seekers. B-roll and alternative pictures from agriculture, the service sector, and immigrant communities near the border can provide a more accurate picture of the lives of immigrant families.

- ◇ **The truth is—Americans support asylum seekers and want to help.** It's critical to remember [that a majority of Americans support](#) protecting those fleeing violence and human rights abuses. The overall 55-23% margin of support for asylum from recent polling by The Los Angeles Times and YouGov includes majorities of Democrats and Independents and a plurality of Republican respondents. In [polling](#) after [polling](#), the vast majority of Americans also support a pathway to legalization, particularly for [beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program](#).
- ◇ **Use accurate images.** If all of the images are about families, children, and people in crisis, it reinforces the idea that they are a burden and an “other.” It dehumanizes them. Many families have photos in their wallets or on their phones, especially of their children, just like we all do. Seeing those families that are just like our families is important in painting a picture of who they are. Additionally, the welcoming spirit and reception that Americans are demonstrating in border cities and around the country is an underreported part of this story.

Provide Facts Avoid Partisan Talking Points:

- ◇ **Look carefully at “open border” claims.** CBP officials have [testified under oath](#) that nothing has changed since Biden took office and the border is NOT open. Most of those crossing the border are seeking asylum, which is legal. And open border [disinformation has aided and abetted cartels](#).
- ◇ **Know the facts on fentanyl.** It's established that over [90% of fentanyl](#) is trafficked into the U.S. by citizens who come through ports of entry. Fentanyl is indeed a very urgent and a serious issue, but it is not an immigration issue. If someone is making a claim about immigrants and fentanyl, ask for evidence and ask what their solution is for that multifaceted issue.
- ◇ **Ask about solutions.** Look deeper into claims from elected officials who are seeking to drastically stop asylum seekers. [Most Republicans voted against](#) funding for port of entry modernization, including screening technology that enables law enforcement to intercept traffickers and fentanyl attempting to enter the U.S. at ports of entry. Ask for specifics. Question past votes that don't square with their concerns.
- ◇ **Seek context.** Don't just accept and report on photos and videos decrying supposed border “chaos.” Most Republicans are opposed to policies that alleviate pressures on the border. When videos start and stop can [eliminate important context](#), avoid sharing videos without context or that dehumanize migrants.

- ◇ **Challenge elected officials and other leaders making negative claims about immigrants and asylum seekers to provide facts and evidence for claims.** Include fact checks of quotes and claims in your reporting, headlines, and social media promotion.

Refrain from Elevating Harmful and Incendiary Rhetoric:

- ◇ **Don't repeat anti-immigrant messaging like "invasion" and the great replacement conspiracy theory.** Those [are white nationalist conspiracies](#) that have inspired mass murderers including in El Paso, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo. The [FBI Director](#), [Attorney General](#), and [Secretary of Homeland Security](#) have all testified that the threat from violent domestic extremists is a leading terrorist concern. In [November 2022](#) and again in [December 2022](#), DHS issued memos warning about threats to migrants and infrastructure at the southern border in response to anti-immigrant-related concerns.
- ◇ **Avoid dehumanizing language.** Describing migrants as a "flood," "swarm," or "surge," or with the pejorative "illegals" is dehumanizing. Migrants are human beings, and most are seeking to enter the asylum system, which is a legal process.
- ◇ **Research and report any of your source's affiliations with groups seeking to end or severely restrict immigration.** The leading anti-immigrant groups – Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), and NumbersUSA – were formed by late [white nationalist John Tanton](#).
- ◇ **Know your sources: research and include the history of groups or legislators advocating against immigrants.** America's Voice tracks their [political ads](#) and [white nationalist rhetoric](#), and many groups echo dangerous white nationalist rhetoric.

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