

THE ADVOCATE

ACTION AT HOME FOR JUST POLICIES ABROAD

Mr. Trump Builds the Walls. We Build the Bridges: Trump's Policy towards Latin America and What We Can Do to Push Back

The LAWG Team

"I will build a great wall—and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me—and I'll build them very inexpensively, I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall."

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

U.S.-Latin American relations were off to a worse-than-rocky start with Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric. And they're not getting better.

Mexico's President Peña Nieto canceled his January meeting with President Trump after the latter tweeted that Peña Nieto might as well cancel if Mexico refused to pay for the wall.

The Trump Administration plans to expand the U.S. Border Patrol (CBP) by 5,000 agents and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents by 10,000. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has already found 33,000 more beds for expected increases in detained migrants, and awarded a contract for a new detention center in Texas.

The next four years look grim. However, the Trump Administration is meeting serious resistance from concerned people like you all over the United States, especially when it comes to the attempted refugee ban, ramped-up deportations, and the wall. The courts are blocking the implementation of the refugee ban executive order. Local governments and advocates are trying to shield undocumented residents from deportations. And President Trump's legislative agenda is meeting opposition from Congress.



#NoBanNoWall protest outside the U.S. Supreme Court.
Photo by Emma Buckhout.

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What does the Trump Administration's approach to Latin America look like so far? And how is it meeting resistance?

ABOUT LAWG

The Latin America Working Group (LAWG) and its sister organization, the LAWG Education Fund, serve a coalition of over 60 national religious, humanitarian, grassroots, and policy organizations. LAWG coordinates advocacy and public policy education to shape U.S. foreign policies toward Latin America that promote human rights, justice, peace, and sustainable development. By offering strategic advice and training for activists nationwide, the LAWG helps U.S. citizens play an active role in shaping foreign policy. The LAWG Education Fund, a 501 (c) 3 organization, carries out educational activities.

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1 This much we know: **Immigration policies are already uprooting Latino/a and other immigrant families in the United States and turning refugees from Central America away at the border.** Trump's deportation force is out in full force with immigration arrests going up by 32 percent since January. While the Department of Homeland Security has talked about targeting "bad hombres," gang members, and violent cartels, it is actually going after anyone who is in the United States without legal status. So far this has led to the deportation of hard-working mothers with no criminal records like Maribel Trujillo Díaz, the arrests of rule-abiding persons like Guadalupe García de Rayos, who was apprehended after her routine ICE check-in, and the deportation of DREAMERS like twenty-three year old Juan Manuel Montes. Children have been too scared to go to school and even local police have spoken out to say that enforcement without priorities make communities less safe. And all along the border CBP agents have been telling families and children that they are no longer welcome in the United States, even when they're scared of returning home.

This seems to be what the administration meant when it said ICE and Border Patrol Agents can finally take the "shackles off" to do their work in what Attorney General Jeff Sessions recently warned is a "new era, the Trump era."

While much of the attention on the refugee and travel ban executive order has justly focused on its impact on people from the singled-out Muslim-majority countries, the order also will have an impact on Latin America. Unaccompanied children and families seeking refuge from violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras will face greater obstacles to obtaining asylum. The entire U.S. Refugee Admission Program, if the ban overcomes challenges in the courts, would be halted for 120 days and the ceiling for refugee admissions would be lowered to 50,000 people this year. Since only 12,000 of those slots are still unfilled, and given the refugee crises in Syria and other parts of the world, few Latin American refugees would receive asylum.

The freeze would also halt the nascent Central America Minors (CAM) Program, which allows a small number of Central American children and teenagers under grave threat to apply for admission to the United States to join family members. It would also halt the U.S. Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA) with Costa Rica, which allows a handful of endangered families, so far only from El Salvador, to apply from Costa Rica for asylum in the United States. The end of these programs would mean the elimination of the only chance Central American children and families have to apply for protection in the United States without having to undertake the dangerous journey across Mexico.

You have encouraged members of Congress to oppose measures and executive orders that spread fear and threaten already vulnerable children, men, and women in our communities and arriving at our border. Some members have proposed bills to void the president's executive orders on border security and immigration enforcement, and asked DHS Secretary John Kelly tough questions to hold ICE and CBP agents accountable for their actions in implementing these orders. But we need to push back even more.

The Latin America Working Group is working hard to highlight why the president's executive orders on immigration are cruel, costly, and ineffective. We denounced CBP's illegal turning away of families and children at our border in a complaint to DHS oversight offices, and joined nongovernmental partners from the border in a hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on this issue. Ongoing actions by ICE and CBP prove that these agencies require greater transparency and extensive reforms to hold them accountable. We must push back on the rhetoric that all immigrants are criminals. We must protect the human rights and rights to asylum of the families and individuals seeking protection from violence and impunity in Central America.

2 The budget proposed by the Trump Administration would dramatically cut the kinds of foreign aid that helps people in need in order to vastly increase military spending and build the wall.

The president's initial budget would slash humanitarian and development programs around the world, including in Latin America. It would shut down the Inter-American Foundation, a small agency that funds grassroots development and addresses rural poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean; reduce aid for refugees and for people facing natural disasters and famines; close the doors of the U.S. Institute of Peace; and cut funding for the United Nations. Climate-change mitigation and other environmental programs, programs to improve respect for labor rights, and programs to support LGBTI and women's rights, in Latin America and across the globe, would get the axe. The budget would also dramatically reduce funding for the State Department's diplomatic activities, which means an ever-greater dominance of military leaders and military solutions in U.S. foreign policy. A leaked document about the more comprehensive budget the Trump Administration plans to present to Congress soon is even more drastic: It calls for a total end to development assistance to help address poverty around the globe.



Image of Honduran land rights activist Berta Cáceres spotted at the People's Climate March in Washington, DC. Photo by Lisa Haugaard.

Massive cuts to education, healthcare, low-cost housing, and the environment in the United States, together with the rollbacks to the better kinds of foreign aid described above, would fund a \$54 billion increase to the defense budget as well as Trump's border wall.

But there is hope that some of these harmful cuts can be blocked. Even Republican Senators Lindsay Graham and John McCain proclaimed the cuts to the State Department and foreign aid "dead on arrival." Congressional leaders from both parties decided to delay action on Trump's proposed military and border wall supplemental spending bill. Instead, they prioritized working out the rest of the FY17 spending bills to fund the government, which were never finalized in 2016 and were extended only until the end of April 2017. As this goes to press, President Trump backed down from his threats to shut down the government over funding for the wall in the FY17 spending bill, and congressional leaders blocked funding for the wall and drastic reductions to development aid.

Yet, President Trump will keep calling for money for the border wall, detention camps for immigrants, and his deportation force. And the drastic cuts to the best kinds of foreign assistance will surely be debated in the FY18 spending bill.



Thousands of people participating in the Women's March on Washington. Photo by Andrea Fernández Aponte.

The Latin America Working Group is pounding the halls of Congress to support the aid we believe in: humanitarian aid; aid for peace accord implementation in Colombia; funding for LGBTI and women's rights; programs to address rural poverty; the Inter-American Foundation; and UN programs that support human rights (such as UN Refugee Agency programs in Central America and Mexico, the anti-corruption agency CICIG in Guatemala, and offices of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia, Guatemala, and Honduras). Our government should use our tax dollars to provide well-targeted aid that helps people around the globe in great need.

However, we are also deeply concerned that this administration will throw our tax dollars at programs that would do major harm, namely the militarization of borders and of law enforcement (for example, the Military Police in Honduras), increased military training throughout the region, and, of course, the border wall. **We are calling on members of Congress to say NO to using our tax dollars for militarization, detention centers, and walls.**

3 Human rights are not, to say the least, high on the agenda. President Trump and the new Secretary of State have indicated that human rights issues are not a priority for U.S. foreign policy. To give just one example, President Trump just invited President Duterte of the Philippines to visit the White House despite the massive extrajudicial killings the latter openly promotes as part of his no-holds-barred drug war. While we call on the Trump Administration to support

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 4]

human rights, we know that at this moment it is crucial for our Congress to raise its own voice on these matters. **That's why the Latin America Working Group, along with Global Witness and other partners, organized support for two letters in which 78 members of the House and Senate called on Secretary Tillerson to demand protection for environmental and land rights activists in Honduras, and an end to impunity in cases like the murder of indigenous and environmental activist Berta Cáceres.** And like many of you, we called for support for the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act (H.R. 1299) recently reintroduced in the House.

We are deeply concerned by the prospect that this administration will back away from U.S. support for LGBTI rights, protection of human rights defenders, and environmental causes in Latin America, especially as violence against environmental activists and LGBTI, especially transgender, people escalates throughout the region.

4 Support for peace in Colombia is in jeopardy.

Over the last 17 years, the United States has supplied over \$10 billion to Colombia, with the vast majority going towards funding the armed conflict and the war on drugs. At the end of the Obama Administration, the United States was finally ready to fund peace. A substantial package known as "Peace Colombia" was unveiled to support the reintegration of the demobilized guerrillas, provide aid for victims, and help bring courts, schools, and rural development to war-torn areas. The Obama Administration's initial doubts about the viability of the peace process eventually transformed into vigorous support for the peace process with the FARC guerrillas.



Colombian human and land rights defender Don Gerardo Acero (center in green) and Cristina Espinel (right) from the Colombia Human Rights Committee with LAWG staff and others who attended our panel, "Colombia: Toward Peace at Last?," at this year's Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, DC. Everyone is holding signs with the names and stories of social leaders who have been killed in post-accord Colombia. Photo by Elisabeth Wilder.

At this critical moment, when there is a historic chance to an end to a conflict in which more than 260,000 people have been killed and 7 million have been internally displaced, U.S. support for peace is in jeopardy.

The Latin America Working Group is calling on the Trump Administration and Congress to make good on the United States' promise to back peace. We organized a letter to Secretary Tillerson from national faith and nongovernmental organizations, brought Colombian human rights and peace activists to talk to the State Department and legislators, and are working with members of Congress and with all of you to call for U.S. aid for peace.

5 The relationship with Mexico is in tatters. President Trump disrespected Mexico throughout the campaign. Now, he continues to say Mexico should pay for the wall, and his administration is trying to bully Mexico into accepting the deportations of non-Mexican migrants from the United States. Rather than engage in productive dialogue, President Trump has vilified Mexico, painting it as a land filled with dangerous drug cartels and uncontrollable violence that needs to be kept out with a wall and the military. That is not how you treat a neighbor.

We believe that a bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico should be built on mutual respect. But it must also stress accountability and human rights.

Some members of Congress are calling for a more respectful relationship. Senators Cardin and Cornyn have introduced resolutions reaffirming the partnerships between both countries. We were glad to see that these resolutions also stressed the need for Mexico to address human rights violations, such as the high number of cases of torture, disappearances—including egregious, unresolved cases like the disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa students—and abuses by the military in Mexico.

The Latin America Working Group is making sure that a focus on human rights is not lost in discussions with Mexico, and that the voices of families seeking justice and Mexican human rights defenders are heard in Congress and the State Department. We are also calling on members of Congress to object to President Trump's harmful language and to promote respectful dialogue that treats Mexico like the neighbor it is instead of an enemy.

6 **The historic opening between the United States and Cuba is in jeopardy.** Trump's statements during the campaign ranged from agreeing with the changes President Obama made, to saying he would roll back all the executive orders if Cuba did not comply with his demands. Certainly, there are those advising the President who would like to see the changes revoked. After Trump's inauguration, administration officials said that a full Cuba policy review is underway.

The number of actors delighted to see change at last—Cuban-Americans who want the freedom to go back and forth between the United States and the island to visit their families; U.S. citizens eager to travel and learn about Cuba; the range of U.S. businesses, including airlines, banking on the changes in U.S.-Cuba relations—will make it difficult to turn back. Still, no one knows yet what President Trump will do. **Making our voices heard before a new policy with Cuba is announced is critical.**

Congress remains the institution where firm decisions must be made and laws must be passed to legally end the travel ban and trade embargo. Support for engagement with Cuba, especially in agricultural trade and in travel, is growing in Congress on both sides of the aisle. Bills to end the travel ban and embargo, and to allow the granting of private credit for agricultural sales, are being re-introduced and are collecting co-sponsors and new supporters. The congressional trend is positive and has generated a positive energy in both chambers and among outside groups supporting engagement.

The Latin America Working Group is pressing ahead to foster support for these pieces of legislation in favor of changing our policy towards Cuba. See article on page 6 about what you can do to move Cuba policy forward.

7 And finally, there is that symbol of division between the United States and Latin America: **the wall.** The Trump Administration is determined to move forward with the wall, even though Mexico is not going to pay for it and many members of Congress are reluctant to allocate the money for it. Moreover, some legislators oppose it in principle, like freshman Adriano Espaillat, the first Dominican American and first formerly undocumented person to be elected to Congress, who introduced the "This Land Is Our Land Act" (H.R. 739) to prohibit new border wall construction.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration has requested bids for the wall contract, requiring the side towards the United States to be "aesthetically pleasing in color." And the side towards Latin America... well, he's made that clear too.

What You Can Do to Push Back on the Trump Administration's Turning Back the Clock on Latin America Policy

Call your member of Congress. Better yet, get together a group of concerned constituents and **meet with your member or aide** in the district office. Or go to a town hall meeting. Tell them to:

- >> Oppose the president's harmful executive orders and funding for the border wall, detention, and increased ICE and CBP forces. Stand by immigrant communities by supporting access to counsel and sanctuary efforts and support refugee admissions and resettlement, including in-country processing programs for children and families at risk in Central America.
- >> Support the kinds of foreign aid that helps people in need in Latin America, especially: aid for peace accord implementation in Colombia, aid for refugees, support for community violence prevention programs in Central America, the Inter-American Foundation, and programs to reduce rural poverty and protect the environment.
- >> Co-sponsor the following bills:
 - The Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act (H.R. 1299)
 - Statue of Liberty Values Act (SOLVe) Ending Trump's Outrageous and Dangerous Executive Order (H.R. 724)
 - Build Bridges Not Walls Act (H.R. 837)
 - This Land Is Our Land Act (H.R. 739)
 - Bill to Nullify Refugee Executive Order and Travel Ban (S. 274)
 - Access to Counsel Act (S. 349)
- >> Advance, do not roll back, the opening of relations with Cuba by cosponsoring the bills on page 6.

Thank you for all you do to push back for just foreign policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean!

Congress Moves Forward on Cuba

Anne McBride & Mavis Anderson

The election of Donald Trump brought with it a range of serious concerns on Latin America issues and uncertainties. One of the many areas of concerns is the future of U.S.-Cuba relations after the historic detente initiated by former President Obama. Trump has vacillated between being open to pursuing business ventures on the island and taking a hard line with the Castro government, largely pandering to an influential conservative sector of the Cuban-American electorate. While the reconsideration of bilateral relations by the executive branch is surrounded by ambiguity, one thing is for sure: the legislative branch will not sit quietly while waiting for President Trump's announcement. Bills have been introduced in the House and Senate, many of which have staunch bipartisan support. Here we outline the bills pending in Congress, their purpose, and their congressional cosponsors:

House Bills

- ›› **Cuba Trade Act of 2017 (H.R. 442)**
 - Introduced by Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN)
 - This bill would allow businesses in the private sector to trade freely with Cuba, while prohibiting taxpayer funds to be used on promotion or development of a new market.
 - Cosponsors (as of 5/5): 21
- ›› **The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act (H.R. 351)**
 - Introduced by Rep. Mark Sanford (R-SC)
 - This bill removes all current travel restrictions to Cuba, including transaction restrictions.
 - Cosponsors (as of 5/5): 15
- ›› **The Cuba Agricultural Exports Act (H.R. 525)**
 - Introduced by Rep. Eric "Rick" Crawford (R-AR)
 - This bill seeks to repeal financing restrictions, allowing firms in the U.S. to offer credit to Cuba in connection with exports of U.S. agricultural goods. It also seeks to eliminate restrictions on key federal funding used in agricultural export promotions.
 - Cosponsors (as of 5/5): 37

Senate Bills

- ›› **The Agricultural Export Expansion Act (S. 275)**
 - Introduced by Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)
 - This bill aims to lift the ban on private banks and companies offering credit for agricultural exports to Cuba, and to help level the playing field for exporters across the country and support American jobs.
 - Cosponsors (as of 5/5): 16
- ›› **The Cuba Trade Act (S. 472)**
 - Introduced by Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS)
 - This bill eliminates the prohibition of assistance to Cuba, and eliminates the president's authority to impose sanctions against Cuban trading partners, etc. Effectively lifts the embargo.
 - Cosponsors (as of 5/5): 0

Probable Senate Bills

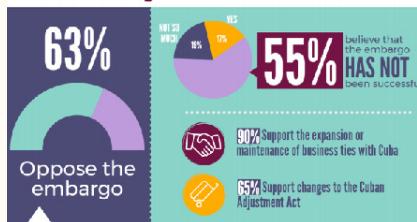
- ›› **The Freedom to Export to Cuba Act**
 - Prev. introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)
 - While Senator Klobuchar has not yet reintroduced this bill, we expect her to do so soon. The bill would lift the current embargo and allow more U.S. goods to be exported to Cuba. The bill would also eliminate the legal barriers to Americans doing business in Cuba.
- ›› **The Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act**
 - Prev. introduced by Sen. Jeff Flake (R-AZ)
 - We're unsure when Senator Flake will reintroduce the bill, but we believe that he will in the future, most likely when the timing appears to be most ripe. The bill, like H.R. 351, would remove all current travel restrictions to Cuba.

Keep track of these bills by going to www.congress.gov.

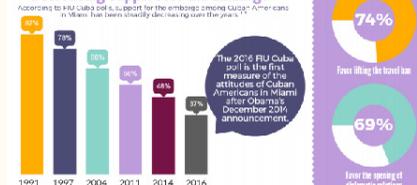
INFOGRAPHIC Support for Changes in U.S.-Cuba Policy

Support for Changes in U.S.-Cuba Policy
Recent polls demonstrate growing support for engagement with Cuba among American citizens.

1. Opposition to the Travel Ban and the Embargo Among Cuban Americans in Miami...



Decreasing Support for the Embargo...



In this time of uncertainty, it is more important than ever to understand real facts regarding public opinions on possible policy measures. To this end, we have created this infographic, which illustrates growing support among Americans for the full normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba.

Download it at: lawg.org/CubaInfographic

What Do Trump's Executive Orders Call For?

Sabrina Hernandez & Emma Buckhout



Anne, Elisabeth, and Sabrina holding signs at a protest against Trump's executive orders. Photo by Anne McBride.

>> Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements

January 25, 2017

- Immediate construction of a physical wall along the entire southern border with Mexico.
- 5,000 additional Border Patrol agents.
- Increase of immigrant detention centers at or near the U.S. border.
- Detention of anyone who crosses the border without authorization—end “catch and release”—including asylum seekers.
- More immigration judges and detention centers to speed up immigration legal decisions and deportations.
- Encourage local law enforcement agencies to act as immigration officers.
- Work to “end the abuse of parole and asylum provisions.”
- Allow federal agents access to all federal lands.
- Prioritize criminal prosecutions.

>> Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States

January 25, 2017

- Change in priorities for deportation to anyone who is convicted or charged with a criminal offense, has a deportation order, or has abused public benefits (essentially dismantling enforcement priorities altogether).
- Additional 10,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers.
- All state and local law enforcement agencies and officers directed to perform the functions of immigration officers to the maximum legal extent.
- Stop federal funding to any “sanctuary jurisdiction.”
- End “Priority Enforcement Program” (PEP) and reinstatement of “Secure Communities” program.
- Creation of the “Office for Victims of Crimes Committed by Removable Aliens.”
- Diplomatic relations conditioned on countries accepting deportees.

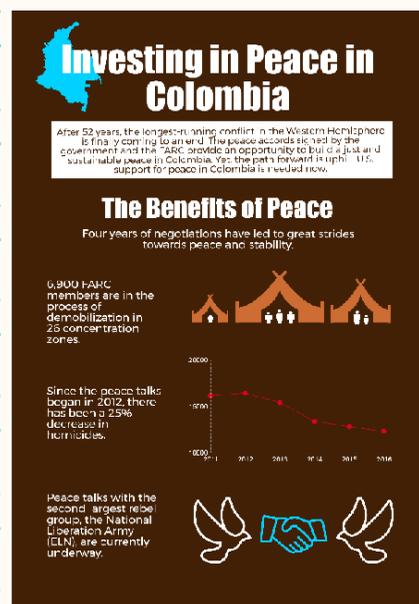
>> Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States*

March 6, 2017

- Suspension of U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days, including Central America Minors (CAM) Program and Costa Rica Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA).
- Cap of 50,000 on refugee admissions for FY 2017, which would reduce slots for refugees from Latin America.
- Suspension of Visa Interview Waiver Program, which would decrease the accessibility to legally enter the United States.
- Complete Biometric Entry-Exit Tracking System.
- 90-day ban on the entrance for 90 days of people from 6 Muslim-majority countries—Iran, Libya, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen (original order included Iraq as well)—into the United States with potential expand the list of countries or length of the ban.

*Note: Two versions of this order have been held up in court lawsuits and are pending final decisions.

INFOGRAPHIC Investing in Peace in Colombia



The United States has spent billions of dollars on war in Colombia. Now, it's time to both financially and diplomatically support peace. This infographic illustrates the benefits of and challenges to supporting the implementation of the peace accords in Colombia.

By Elisabeth Wilder

Download it at: lawg.org/ColumbiaInfographic



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