

Trump Caves; Plenty of Reaction

By Luis Montoya June 21, 2018

BROWNSVILLE, RGV – Reaction to President Trump’s executive order on the separation of immigrant families has been swift, with most community groups and elected officials opposing the “zero tolerance” policy.

Trump made the announcement that he was changing policy on Wednesday, June 20, which was designated World Refugee Day by the United Nations. He directed the Department of Homeland Security not to separate families as they await immigration proceedings.



Industrial Areas Foundation

The Industrial Areas Foundation, the nation’s oldest network of Broad Based Community Organizations, with over 75 organizations throughout the United States representing hundreds of thousands of families, issued this statement:

“The Trump Administration needs to immediately stop and desist from further separation of immigrant children and their parents, quickly reunite those 2,000 family members, and begin a humane approach to border security and immigration reform. While the president may soon reverse part of this policy, it is important that the victimized children be cared for respectfully and appropriately, including inspection of the detention facilities by local clergy and health providers.”

Fr. Kevin Collins, OMI, of **Valley Interfaith**-IAF, and pastor of St. Eugene de Mazenod Church in Brownsville, Texas, said: "The 'zero tolerance' immigration policy promulgated by the Attorney General and the Trump Administration is nothing short of cruel. It is un-American to separate children from their parents." Collins is pictured above.

Rabbi John Linder, of **Valley Interfaith Project**-IAF and Senior Rabbi of Temple Solel of Paradise Valley, Arizona, said:

"Forcibly taking children from their mothers and fathers, is nothing short of government-sanctioned child abuse. Where will this stop? Children in cages, tent cities. What's next? Every elected official at the local, state, and national level must tell the administration that this brutality cannot be tolerated. The lack of political will on all sides for balanced, comprehensive immigration reform is responsible for this mess. Children are never to be used as political pawns. The Trump Administration has crossed a moral line."

Fr. Mike Walsh of Holy Trinity Parish in Dallas, TX, with **Dallas Area Interfaith**-IAF, said:

"It's stunning that we are perpetrating something so horrible for families. This is the 21st century, and our government is placing children in penned cages. We're a better country than this."

Maria Elena Manzo, leader with **Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action** (COPA), in Salinas, California, said:

"Virtually every moral voice and authority is denouncing these administrative actions. This is horrifying. What can be more sacred than the family? It is torture to take children away from their parents."

Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said:

"I support the executive action President Trump has taken today. No one wants to separate families and the president's action will ensure that those who are crossing our border illegally are detained and our laws are enforced. I continue to urge Congress to move forward with an immigration plan that includes increased enforcement resources, a border wall, and reforms to the immigration process."

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials said:

“While we are pleased to see President Trump sign an executive order that will ensure immigrant families are kept together as they await immigration proceedings, we simply cannot ignore the irreversible and catastrophic damage that has been inflicted on the thousands of innocent children who were ripped apart from their parents while this policy has been carried out by the Department of Homeland Security.

“Our nation’s Latino leaders will be vigilant as the implementation of this new directive takes place, paying close attention to ensure an immediate and effective strategy is put in place to reunite every mother, father and child who has been separated from other family members as a result of the failure of the federal government to implement humane immigration policies.

“This executive order at its core is still only window dressing. It will not meaningfully address the underlying humanitarian crisis that is occurring along the U.S. border each and every day as a result of the “zero tolerance” immigration enforcement policy that remains in place.

“The fact that ripping families apart was the policy of the United States for even one minute, hour or day is simply unconscionable. As a nation, we simply cannot claim to stay true to our values and ideals while we continue to imprison migrant children and adults in jail-like facilities resembling cages that strip them of their basic dignity and human decency.

“America is at a crossroads. History is watching, and it is up to our nation’s leaders to work together to put in place a modern framework that ends these kinds of heinous acts and addresses our broken immigration system once and for all. NALEO members are up to the challenge, but we cannot do it alone. We will need other courageous leaders to join us in order to make comprehensive immigration reform a reality.”

United Farm Workers

United Farm Workers Foundation Executive Director Diana Tellefson Torres said:

“Today, Donald Trump signed an Executive Order after public concern of his administration’s inhumane zero-tolerance policy that rips apart children from their parents at the border. The executive order –written between the White House, the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security– does nothing to solve the callous treatment of families on the border and does not stop the detention of innocent children nor the separation of families.

“Let’s be clear, this administration continues to lie to the American public. The Farm Worker Movement denounces today’s Executive Order and stresses Members of Congress like Denham and Valadao –who argue stand for immigrants – take action to end this cruel practice once and for all. They must

vote against Goodlatte's Secure America's Future Act (H.R.4760), and Speaker Ryan's Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018 – both anti-immigrant and erroneous proposals– and fight for humane and fair solutions like the Dream Act.

“Putting children in cages, even if some of them are allowed to be detained with their parents, and continuing to use the criminal justice system to attempt to deter people from seeking asylum protection, is not the solution. Children do not belong in cages.”

Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy

Bee Moorhead of the Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy said:

“President Trump signed an executive order to keep families jailed together instead of separately, saying ‘You’re going to see a lot of happy people.’

“But the executive order raises more questions than it answers: While the President has directed the Department of Homeland Security to incarcerate families together, instead of separating parents and children, it maintains the zero-tolerance policy of charging all asylum seekers with crimes; it continues the practice of incarcerating children; and it encourages expedited deportations.

“Moreover, the order states that the Administration will seek to change a decades-old legal precedent limiting the amount of time children can be detained, even with their parents.”

Congressman Vicente Gonzalez

Congressman Vicente Gonzalez of McAllen said:

“Clarity. The American people and immigrant families, in danger of separation, need more than a haphazard promise – they need clarity. The President’s executive order is disguised as an end to the plight of so many immigrant families, but it is an empty promise. Congress is ready to solve the immigration crisis on all fronts. I expect the leader of the free world to be on the same page.”

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

Jeanne Atkinson, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., said:

“We will be watching to see whether the administration follows the law concerning how long it may keep families in detention.”

Atkinson pointed out that under a court order and settlement agreement in the the Flores v. Sessions cases, which governs care for juveniles in immigration detention, minors being held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement must be released after 20 days. An executive order cannot supersede a court order.

Atkinson said that under its policy of rigorously enforcing immigration laws, “It is also the policy of this administration to maintain family unity, including by detaining alien families together where appropriate and consistent with law and available resources.”

“That sounds like the administration is ordering federal agencies to follow the law about family detention,” Atkinson said.

Atkinson said Trump’s executive order notably failed address the issue of thousands of children who have already been separated from their parents, many of whom have no idea where their sons and daughters are. Some parents have even been deported while their children remain in federal custody,” Atkinson said.

“The administration deserves no credit for heeding the enormous public outcry about this barbaric practice. This was a crisis of their own creation, a thinly veiled and spectacularly failed political stunt that deserved every ounce of criticism it received from the public, politicians, religious leaders and corporations.”

La Unión del Pueblo Entero

Juanita Valdez-Cox, director of La Unión del Pueblo Entero, said:

“Families belong together in communities, not cages. We know that the safest place for children is with their families in communities where they can receive the care they need. No one should be subjected to indefinite detention, much less families with children.

“Just like he did with immigrant youth when he ended the DACA program, President Trump is holding migrant families hostage in order to demand payment in the form of funding for the border wall, expanding immigration detention and his deportation force, and shutting the door to legal migration to the U.S.

“We will continue fighting for immigrant families, both those separated at the border and in our own communities. We must continue our outrage against this child abuse, now as the administration prepares to expand the practice of putting entire families in cages. Congress can put a stop to this abuse by defunding CBP and ICE now.”

Texas Democratic Party

Texas Democratic Party Chair Gilberto Hinojosa said:

“It’s unconscionable that children are waking up in Texas scared, alone and subjected to more trauma. Let’s be clear, building more detention centers is not the solution to our broken immigration crisis or the desperate need of asylees seekers. Immigrant families still face the horror of indefinite detention, which will only continue family separation.

“Trump only signed this executive order because Americans spoke out as they saw the horrors of children being separated from their families unfold right before their eyes. Now, Trump thinks he can wipe his hands clean, but his latest proposal sustains the damage these families face.

“Texas Democrats will continue to fight along with grassroots organizations to not only end family separation but to create a humane and just immigration system.”

Grassroots Leadership

Claudia Muñoz, immigration programs director at Grassroots Leadership, said:

“Together in a cage is not better than separate cages. This order is going to lead to more and potentially longer family detention. Locking families in detention camps with a proven history of abuse to be traumatized together instead of traumatized apart is a sick way to supposedly ‘keep families together.’”

Along with the already intense public outcry, a legal challenge is likely to follow the announcement, Muñoz predicted. A 1997 settlement known as the Flores settlement bars the prolonged detention of children in secure, unlicensed facilities, she pointed out. Muñoz said Trump’s announcement amounts to a promise to violate this standard.

Private prison stocks soared at the news of the executive order, Muñoz pointed out, noting that the nation’s two largest family detention centers, located in Dilley and Karnes City, Texas, are operated by for profit prison corporations CoreCivic and GEO Group, respectively.

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Sameera Hafiz, senior policy strategist at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, said:

“Trump’s directives have doubled down on family separations at the border to frighten immigrants from fleeing life-threatening violence. Make no mistake: this executive order is a misleading attempt to appease the public after seeing thousands of children separated from their parents, hearing the cries from the cages they have been placed in, and learning about the violence that they have survived. The executive order gives only the appearance of halting the thousands of family separations that Trump initiated and does not address the trauma that children and parents have already endured.

“The only way to solve the current crisis is to end the zero tolerance policy and stop prosecuting the act of migration. Without ending the prosecutions, family separations will not end. The administration must offer support systems for immigrants to build new lives instead of continuing to enact extreme and nativist policies that cause irreversible harm and expand the mass incarceration of people of color in the criminal justice system.”

Latino Victory Project

Cristóbal J. Alex, president of Latino Victory Project, said:

“In response to growing public pressure over his policy of ripping children from their parents’ arms and warehousing babies in ‘tender age’ camps, President Trump’s solution is to jail families indefinitely. There is no limit to the White House’s cruelty, and it will fall on Congress to put an end to this manufactured crisis of historic proportions.”

American Bar Association

The American Bar Association issued this statement:

The American Bar Association is pleased that the administration has decided to stop the inhumane and untenable policy of separating immigrant children from their parents. We call on the government to expeditiously and efficiently reunite families and minimize any further harm to the children. The ABA pledges its full support in working within the legal community to make this happen.

The executive order is a first step. Comprehensive and just immigration reform is still needed. The ABA opposes detention of noncitizens except in extraordinary circumstances and favors humane alternatives to detention that are the least restrictive necessary to ensure appearance in their immigration proceedings, including pre-hearing release and bond. It is not an either-or choice between separation and detention of families. Families should not be detained unless there is some individualized determination of flight or security risk.

If families are detained, clear standards are needed that allow visits by independent observers and friends and family. Detainees also should receive legal information explaining the process and their rights.

In addition, asylum seekers legally approaching ports of entry should not be turned away or told to return later. Our country has the obligation to accept legal asylum seekers and not force them to try to enter the country illegally or face other dangers as they wait for entry.

In addition, the ABA supports the appointment of counsel at federal government expense to represent all indigent persons in removal proceedings.

The ABA is committed to defending liberty and advancing the rule of law as well as protecting our borders. We ask that all officials exercise restraint and a common-sense approach centered on true public safety when it comes to arrest and deportation and we call on everyone involved in the process to be treated with dignity and respect.

Detention Watch Network

Danny Cendejas, Organizing Director of Detention Watch Network, said:

“This is not an about face for Trump. Trump created the crisis at the border with the primary goal to ruthlessly lock up as many people as possible and to make the case for immigrant detention expansion. With today’s executive order signing, Trump is doubling down on his anti-immigrant, nativist agenda by increasing the widely denounced policy of family detention, that puts women and children behind bars, exacerbating trauma and stripping people of their dignity. Furthermore, the executive order seeks to dismantle the Flores settlement, which limits child detention and provides critical safeguards.

“We condemn Trump’s executive order and the poisonous Republican bills circulating by Representative Bob Goodlatte, House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senator Ted Cruz. It is clear that these efforts by the GOP are all apart of the same design, to criminalize communities of color and expand the already massive, unaccountable and deadly immigrant detention system.

“Members of Congress must stand with immigrants and keep families and communities together by voting no on the GOP bills, ending the zero tolerance policy of migrant prosecutions at the border, calling for the release of all people from detention and defunding the agencies the tear them apart, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP).”

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights

Angelica Salas, executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, said:

“For days President Trump lied to the American public indicating he did not have the power to not separate families. Now, President Trump’s executive order is a slap in the face to reason, morality, and human decency. In a crisis that he and the Republican party created, today’s directive worsens a horrific situation for immigrant families everywhere.

“We reject the further criminalization of immigrants. We reject the unearthing of family concentration camps. We reject the insanity of ignoring the rights of children and the flaunting of *Flores v Sessions*. We reject the formalization of government-sanctioned torture on immigrant families and children at the border and in the interior.

“To President Trump, we say: Children and families belong in communities not in family concentration camps.

“Americans know all too well what a family detention camp looks like. We should not allow this President and the Republican party to take us back to dark times when ill-advised actions by a few marred our nation’s soul.”

American Immigration Council

Beth Werlin, executive director of the American Immigration Council, said:

“Today’s executive order does nothing to change the fact that the administration is attacking families and criminalizing asylum seekers. The zero-tolerance policy is cruel and unnecessary. We should not have to choose between separating parents from their children and expanding the shameful practice of imprisoning families. Our experience defending families in detention, first in Artesia, New Mexico and now in Dilley, Texas, has taught us that family detention is never humane.”

Amnesty International USA

Denise Bell, refugee and migrant rights researcher at Amnesty International USA, issued this statement:

“Make no mistake—this executive order is a betrayal of families fleeing violence and persecution. Mothers, fathers, and children must not be held behind bars for prolonged periods for seeking safety. Not only does imprisoning children go against our country’s shared values of dignity and equality, but it is also unlawful and threatens to permanently stain the U.S. human rights record.

“People who are running for their lives have the right to seek protection. The United States cannot continue to treat vulnerable families fleeing horrific violence and persecution like criminals. We must do everything we can to ensure protection for people who have lost everything. It is time to end family detention once and for all.”

Bell said Amnesty International has campaigned to end the practice of family detention, urging the Department of Homeland Security to release families fleeing violence and persecution.