

Trump imposes new class-based immigration restrictions

By Eric London
13 August 2019

Yesterday, the Trump administration published a new regulation in the federal register that will give immigration officers the power to deny legal permanent residency and citizenship to any immigrant on explicitly class-based grounds.

Under the new class quota, an undocumented immigrant can be denied legal residency and citizenship if they have “a medical condition” that could interfere with work, if they do not have enough money to cover “any reasonably foreseeable medical costs” from that condition, if they have “financial liabilities,” if they have a low credit score, if they do not have health insurance, if they do not have a college degree, or if they do not speak English.

In addition, any immigrant who has used social programs like food stamps, Medicaid and housing subsidies can also be denied legal permanent residency and citizenship.

The move specifically targets working class parents for deportation. Once found “inadmissible” on “public charge” grounds, an immigrant can be placed in removal proceedings and slated for deportation.

The new regulations are directly targeted at immigrants who are seeking permanent legal status (a green card) while they are in the US on a temporary visa. It will mean that they will be unable to use any government programs. The impact, however, will be more broadly felt, as the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants and their citizen children fear that using health care or other services will result in their immediate deportation.

Trump and his fascist allies present this maneuver as protecting social programs for use by “Americans.” Coming from an administration that has slashed taxes for the rich, cut social programs and gutted workplace safety regulations, this is a lie.

The lie was exposed when Acting Director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Ken Cuccinelli declared that the new policy “reinforces the ideas of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility.” The ruling class has used such hallmarks of Reagan “trickle down” economics to justify 40 years of attacks on social programs

for all Americans.

Workers of all nationalities must recognize this move for what it is: an attack on the social rights and living standards of the entire working class.

The new policy will slash social spending and transfer billions of dollars from the working class into the pockets of the financial aristocracy. Far from “protecting” social programs for “Americans,” the ruling class will cite declining use as proof that programs upon which all Americans rely must be gutted to the core.

Trump’s Wall Street allies want the change because it will weaken the objective social position of the working class against capital. An estimated 5 percent of the national labor force is undocumented, and by placing this section of the working class in a constant state of terror, big business hopes to force it to quietly accept even lower pay and worse working conditions out of fear that any complaint will trigger massive workplace raids.

This was the message sent by last week’s mass raids of meatpacking facilities located outside Jackson, Mississippi, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents descended upon seven workplaces and dragged immigrant workers off the assembly line, leaving dozens of children without their parents on the first day of school.

The raids were an act of class retribution. In 2018, workers at the targeted facilities won a \$3.75 million settlement in a class action lawsuit against Koch Foods, alleging that management “touched and/or made sexually suggestive comments to female Hispanic employees, hit Hispanic employees, and charged many of them money for normal everyday work activities.” Workers who complained were summarily fired and harassed.

These are the conditions that Wall Street wants to exploit the entire working class, regardless of nationality or immigration status, and corporate America plans to enforce them through state repression. Workers who think showing their proof of citizenship will protect them from being arrested, detained, beaten or fired for speaking out like their immigrant allies are engaged in self-deception.

The Trump administration is operating according to a conscious class strategy aimed at dividing the working class in advance of mass strikes and social protest. Today, global stock markets tumbled over fears of growing “unrest,” with financial newspapers worldwide citing ongoing mass demonstrations and strikes in Hong Kong, as well as protests in Puerto Rico, as signs that corporate profits are at risk.

Across the world, this strategy is expressed in the elevation of far-right parties into government or prominent positions in the state apparatus.

The xenophobic message of Trump and his allies, including the Alternative for Germany (AfD), National Rally in France, Matteo Salvini’s Northern League in Italy, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and the right-wing governments of Eastern Europe, is aimed above all at pitting workers against each other and converting social anger over inequality in a reactionary direction where it poses no threat to corporate profits.

In the US, the Democratic Party has facilitated Trump’s fascist strategy, which produced the terrorist attacks in Gilroy, California, and El Paso, Texas. This year, Democrats have voted to increase funding for ICE and Customs and Border Protection as well as to provide billions in funding for his wall along the US-Mexico Border.

In fact, the “public charge” provision which the Trump administration is now expanding dramatically is based on statutory language that the Democratic Party voted overwhelmingly to support when Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) of 1996.

In 1996, Democrats voted to facilitate immigration officials’ ability to consider financial status when deciding whether an immigrant is “likely to become a public charge,” paving the way for Trump to specifically enumerate and greatly expand the basis for such inadmissibility findings today. Those Democrats who voted “yes” on the bill include Bernie Sanders, James Clyburn, Elijah Cummings, Steny Hoyer, Adam Schiff, Nancy Pelosi and Charles Schumer.

Class battles of historically unprecedented proportions are on the horizon. The growth of strikes and expansion of mass demonstrations across Africa, Asia and Latin America testify to this fact. The architects of ruling class policy are preparing for the coming struggles by dividing workers and pitting them against each other based on race, nationality, age, gender and sexual orientation.

Workers would be making a disastrous mistake if they fell for their enemies’ trick. Workers’ position in society is determined not by their nationality, their gender or the color of their skin, but by their common objective exploited position in relationship to the capitalist mode of production.

Workers’ real enemy is the world’s aristocracy.

Twenty-six billionaires own as much wealth as the poorest 3.8 billion. In the US, *Bloomberg* reported Monday that the Walton family—owners of Walmart—increases its wealth by \$100 million *each day*. *Bloomberg* explains:

“Other American dynasties are close behind in terms of the assets they’ve accrued. The Mars family, of candy fame, added \$37 billion, bringing its fortune to \$127 billion. The Kochs, the industrialists-cum-political-power-players, tacked on \$26 billion, to \$125 billion. So it goes around the globe. America’s richest 0.1% today control more wealth than at any time since 1929, but their counterparts in Asia and Europe are gaining too. Worldwide, the 25 richest families now control almost \$1.4 trillion in wealth, up 24% from last year.”

Workers must prepare themselves for the struggles ahead by establishing their international unity and educating their friends and coworkers of the need to ruthlessly oppose all those who seek to divide and thereby weaken the international working class.

Google is blocking the *World Socialist Web Site* from search results.

To fight this blacklisting:

Share this article with friends and coworkers

- Facebook
- Twitter
- E-Mail
- Reddit

To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>