



AP FACT CHECK: Trump comments on legal immigration in speech

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SAN DIEGO (AP) — A look at one of President Donald Trump's statements from his State of the Union address on Tuesday night and how it compares with the facts:

TRUMP: "I want people to come into our country in the largest numbers ever, but they have to come in legally."

THE FACTS: His policy recommendations to date do not reflect this wish.

The plan he proposed upon taking office would have sharply limited the ability of citizens and permanent residents to bring in family, which he derisively called "chain migration." The Cato Institute, which favors more open immigration policies, estimated his plan would cut the number of legal immigrants by up to 44 percent, the largest cut to legal immigration since the 1920s.

According to data from the Homeland Security Department, about 750,000 of more than 1.1 million people who obtained green cards in 2017 did so through family relations. Trump's plan called for limiting family-based green cards to spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens and green card holders, a dramatic cut.

Trump has said he wants to eliminate diversity visas. The government awards about 50,000 visas a year by lottery under a 1990 law that aimed to diversify the immigrant population by selecting people from underrepresented regions of the world. They are predominantly from Africa.

Trump has slashed the number of refugees the U.S. will accept for two straight years. Up to 30,000 refugees will be allowed into the country this year, down from a cap of 45,000 last year. It will be the lowest ceiling on admissions since the program began in 1980.

In addition, the president ended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which began during Barack Obama's presidency and temporarily shielded about 800,000 young immigrants known as "Dreamers" from deportation. Last month, the Supreme Court took no action on the administration's request to decide by early summer whether Trump's bid to end the program was legal. It's been protected by several federal courts.

He has talked about switching to merit-based instead of family-based immigration and said at times that he wants to make it easier for temporary employees to work and for graduates from top colleges to stay in the country. But researchers have said the net effect of his proposals would be fewer legal immigrants.

Is the president changing course? Trump's statement was not included in his prepared text, raising the possibility it was off the cuff. But after the speech, senior press aide Hogan Gidley repeated Trump's comment, on Twitter, about wanting the highest level of legal immigration ever.