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Trump doubles down on anti-immigration position

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Trump's speech in Phoenix confirmed that his supposed softening on immigration turned out to be wishful thinking. After that speech, nobody can claim that Trump's position on immigration is too soft. Trump reiterated his position paper on immigration that called for a large-scale increase in immigration enforcement along the border and in the interior of the United States through the building of a Great Wall, a tripling of ICE agents, the creation of another deportation force, and mandating the unworkable E-Verify program. He also reiterated his support for slashing illegal immigration.

His listed deportation priorities included visa overstays who account for about 42 percent of all illegal immigrants and an increasing proportion of the total. When combined with his call to revoke DACA, remove all violent and property criminals (wise policy to address a small problem that is already law), and for full enforcement of all immigration laws that means virtually all illegal immigrants will be deported under his plan.

To remove any doubt of this, he also said that "no one will be immune or exempt from enforcement." Trump interprets enforcement as meaning, "Anyone who has entered the United States illegally is subject to deportation. That is what it means to have laws and to have a country. Otherwise, we don't have a country."

Trump's proposed restrictions on LEGAL immigration could slash the number of green cards issued by up to 62.9 percent.

Trump's speech included numerous dog whistles to appeal to anti-immigration populists. He cited the Center for Immigration Studies, an immigration-restrictionist think tank well known among Trump's anti-immigration base. Trump said there could be 30 million illegal immigrants in the United States, a wildly exaggerated number which was lifted from page 72 of Ann Coulter's anti-immigration rant *Adios America*. If there were really 30 million illegal immigrants in the United States, their already low crime rates would be even more minuscule relative to their proportion of their population. Trump mentioned Eisenhower's immigration enforcement actions that are frequently and incorrectly cited by restrictionists. He called for a "physical" border wall, which is popular among Know-Nothings who are skeptical of electronic border enforcement. He also said he'd break the cycle of illegal immigration and amnesty which is a common point in restrictionist circles. At its most lenient, Trump's speech is an endorsement of the anti-immigration establishment's position on the topic and therefore not a softening.

The most remarkable part of Trump's speech was not that he doubled down on his immigration views but that he felt he had to do so in late August. This is usually when candidates are busy appealing to moderates rather than doubling down on minority positions. His haphazard mention of the Second Amendment, repealing Obamacare, global warming, and other conservative issues in addition to his rejection of amnesty show just how desperate he is to shore up his support from reluctant conservatives. If Trump loses in November, and all signs are pointing to that, this speech shows that nobody can reasonably claim that it was because he was "too soft" on immigration. His probable November loss will be rightly blamed on his anti-immigration position.

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