



Fact-checking Trump's first general election ad on immigration

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Doom and gloom will befall the nation under a Hillary Clinton administration, implies Donald Trump's first TV ad of the general election.

"In Hillary Clinton's America, the system stays rigged against Americans," the narrator says. "Syrian refugees flood in. Illegal immigrants convicted of committing crimes get to stay, collecting Social Security benefits, skipping the line. Our border open. It's more of the same, but worse. Donald Trump's America is secure. Terrorists and dangerous criminals kept out. The border secured. Our families safe. Change that makes America safe again. Donald Trump for president."

The 30-second ad launched Aug. 19 and has aired more than 200 times in the Philadelphia, Raleigh and Tampa areas alone, according to Political TV Ad Archive. All are in swing states.

PolitiFact has looked into four key claims in Trump's national ad against his Democratic opponent. The spot reuses talking points Trump has made throughout the campaign — some bearing elements of truth, some accurate and others, outright false.

We'll walk you through them.

Syrian refugees

Trump's ad says that in Clinton's America, "Syrian refugees flood in."

After the mass shooting at an Orlando nightclub that left 49 people dead and dozens more wounded, Trump pushed for restrictions on the number of people who come into the United States. The 29-year-old Orlando shooter, Omar Mateen, was born in New York. His father, Seddique Mir Mateen, is a naturalized U.S. citizen from Afghanistan.

Trump back then said Clinton wanted a "500 percent increase" in Syrian refugees without a screening plan. "Tell me. Tell me, how stupid is that?" Trump questioned.

He was wrong on the lack of screening. But Clinton has said she would raise President Barack Obama's planned admittance of at least 10,000 Syrian refugees to 65,000 — a 550 percent increase. We rated Trump's statement that Clinton plans to "massively increase" admissions of refugees, including a 500 percent increase of Syrians, Mostly True.

Undocumented criminal immigrants

If Clinton makes it to the White House, "Illegal immigrants convicted of committing crimes get to stay," Trump's ad said, over video footage of what appear to be border patrol agents detaining people in a deserted area.

The ad makes it sound as if Clinton would let all convicted undocumented immigrants stay in the country, no matter what crime they committed.

The Democratic candidate hasn't said she would deport every undocumented immigrant convicted of a crime, leaving room for interpretation that some may stay.

When pressed about deportations, Clinton has said she would focus on deporting violent criminals and keep families together.

"My priorities are to deport violent criminals, terrorists, and anyone who threatens our safety," Clinton said in March in a debate against then Democratic challenger Bernie Sanders.

Trump's ad suggests Clinton would let all undocumented convicted criminals stay in the country, though Clinton has said she would deport violent criminals. We rated this segment of the ad Half True.

Social Security benefits

Trump's ad, if interpreted literally, says Clinton as president would let undocumented immigrants convicted of crimes stay in the United States and get Social Security payments, ahead of others.

That just doesn't seem plausible, so instead we checked a more plausible reading of the claim: that the overall undocumented immigrant population would get Social Security benefits under Clinton.

Undocumented immigrants are not entitled to Social Security benefits. However, some immigrants who are not U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents are eligible for "deferred action," as in the case of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals beneficiaries.

DACA does not lead to U.S. citizenship, but people covered by it are considered "lawfully present."

Deferred action gives people relief from deportation for defined periods of time. For DACA recipients, it's two years, and they can apply for renewals. People who get DACA can also get a Social Security number and apply for a work permit.

Deferred action beneficiaries are not barred from federal programs that they contribute to with work income, such as Social Security and Medicare. But to get Social Security benefits, deferred action recipients must meet the program's eligibility requirements, including paying into the system for at least 10 years.

Clinton backs DACA and other deferred actions presented by Obama, which allow certain immigrants to work and become part of the Social Security system.

However, Trump's ad captures none of this nuance, instead insinuating that all illegal immigrants would be getting immediate handouts under Clinton's presidency.

This part of the ad rates Mostly False.

Open borders

Clinton is for open borders, according to Trump's ad.

One of Trump's banner messages is that he will build a wall along the southern border to keep away undocumented immigrants. Clinton on the other hand, he has said, would create "totally open borders."

His claim about open borders evokes a system that would let people travel freely between Mexico (or anywhere, really) and the United States.

Clinton's immigration reform plan calls for a pathway to citizenship, but also supports border protection.

"We need to secure our borders, I'm for it, I voted for it, I believe in it, and we also need to deal with the families, the workers who are here, who have made contributions, and their children," Clinton said in November.

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration expert at the libertarian Cato Institute, told us Trump "may be conflating the term 'open borders' with anything less than perfect enforcement of our immigration laws."

We've rated False Trump's statement that Clinton would "create totally open borders" and also gave a False rating to a similar claim from Rudy Giuliani on Clinton's border stance.