

# COMMON-SENSE IMMIGRATION POLICY

The ACLU of Texas works in communities along the border, and what we hear from border residents doesn't always match the political rhetoric in Austin. Border communities want safety and security, a chance at an education, and the opportunity to drive without fear. These communities are greatly impacted by decisions made at the Texas Capitol, but they are not always consulted.

## Over-policing our border communities is a waste of money

We all agree that border security and immigration enforcement are the federal government's job. Texas shouldn't spend its scarce law enforcement resources duplicating federal efforts.

Just in the Lower Rio Grande Valley there are already more than 3,200 border patrol agents and more on the way. With all those boots on the ground, it's not surprising that our border cities are among the safest in the state. Of the 24 Texas metro areas ranked by the FBI, Brownsville has the *least* violent crime; McAllen ranks 18th.

Yet the state is using taxpayer dollars to deploy Texas Department of Public Safety resources for "border security." This creates confusion and distrust among border residents. In addition to wasting money, over-policing of border communities leads to unlawful harassment and profiling of border residents because they are perceived as immigrants or look Latino. Border residents should not fear law enforcement agents; they deserve the same rights and sense of security that every other Texan enjoys.

County sheriffs and police chiefs have opposed an ongoing border surge because they know the money that's been wasted could be better invested in local law enforcement agencies.

## Young people who grow up in Texas should have the chance to attend college and find employment in our economy

Providing in-state college tuition for youth who grew up in our state is just the right thing to do. The "dreamers," as these young people have come to be known, are our friends, our neighbors, our classmates, and our fellow parishioners. They are among our best and brightest and seek only the chance to contribute to the great state they call home.

Studies like the "Cost-Benefit Analysis of Texas House Bill 1403" have concluded that providing in-state tuition benefits us all: it increases wages, reduces incarceration costs, and cuts public healthcare spending. Supporting in-state tuition for all residents allows students to attain academic success, serve in our military, and make contributions that will help stimulate our state's economy. Our economic future depends on educating these young people.

## Increase access to drivers' licenses for people living and working in our state

Licensing drivers based on ability to drive improves public safety. Conversely, the exclusion of unauthorized immigrants from eligibility for driver's licenses and insurance, and therefore from proper road safety and driving tests, makes Texas roads more dangerous and imposes higher costs on insured drivers.

The House Committee on State Affairs reported that "failure to address this issue" means that a growing number of people will continue to drive without a license "because lawmakers offered no alternative provision." The remedy they suggested: "enacting legislation that creates a conditional driving permit, [] allowing individuals who cannot prove lawful presence to obtain the legal means to operate a motor vehicle." This is a conservative, common-sense approach to protecting Texas citizens and making roadways safer.

Expanding access to driver's licenses also helps our economy. When immigrants are able to drive, they are better able to make economic and social contributions to their communities.



For more information contact:  
**Matt Simpson, [msimpson@aclutx.org](mailto:msimpson@aclutx.org) or**  
**Astrid Dominguez, [adominguez@aclutx.org](mailto:adominguez@aclutx.org)**