

Immigration Action Team Report for April 2023 Board Meeting

With the start of the 118th Congress, the IAT had a retreat to update our priorities for 2023-24. We agreed that our overarching priority continues to be the comprehensive reworking of national immigration laws. However, for the near term, we plan to work on restoring asylum (and opposing policies like Title 42 and remaining in Mexico, and the widespread use of detention) and working toward protection and legal status for specific groups (including Dreamers, Afghan evacuees, farm workers, and other essential workers). The IAT updated the Action Alert requesting a pathway to permanent resident status for Dreamers, and it was reposted.

In February, we again focused on the Afghan Adjustment Act (AAA). The AAA, which we first supported in 2022, is a bipartisan bill that would provide permanent residency for the >75K Afghan refugees who we evacuated from Afghanistan to the US in August 2021. It would also assist those we left behind in Afghanistan by enlarging the categories of people eligible for SIV status and creating a Task Force to coordinate efforts. Despite bi-partisan co-sponsorship, it was not included in the omnibus spending bill that was passed at the end of 2022, so a new version of the Afghan Adjustment Act will be introduced soon.

The IAT began scheduling meetings with members of Congress with the objective of encouraging support and even co-sponsorship of the new version. The team had the first meeting of 2023 with Jonah Dross of Rep. Jen Kiggans' office (VA-02) on February 21. In March, the IAT held meetings with two Congressional offices on the Afghan Adjustment Act: Rep. John James (R-MI-10) on March 10 and Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA-1) on March 14. The objective of the meetings was to encourage support and even co-sponsorship of the new version of the AAA.

The IAT also submitted a formal comment opposing a new immigration policy being proposed by the Biden administration entitled: Circumvention of Lawful Pathways (February 23, 2023). This policy would allow the Biden administration to continue turning back most people seeking protection at the US southern border, either to their home countries or to Mexico, unless they had already applied for asylum and were rejected in Mexico or another country through which they traveled on their way to the U.S. border. The policy would allow an exception for asylum seekers who wait in Mexico for many months while trying to obtain a limited number of appointments at the border.

The IAT is working diligently with the DAT on a program for the UU General Assembly in Pittsburgh. The program will describe UUSJ's advocacy activities, highlight how our action teams engage with Congress and the Executive Branch, and describe how UUs throughout the country can join in.