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Why Work Permits Won't Work in New York City — or Anywhere Else

Elected officials in New York City believe they've finally found the solution to the migrant crisis plaguing the Big Apple: work permits.

The idea of handing out work visas to the tens of thousands of illegal aliens who have shown up in New York over the past year is being championed by leaders across the state, including Mayor Eric Adams and Governor Kathy Hochul. These officials have spent months [asking](#) the Biden administration to authorize work permits for these migrants, and are now considering going around the federal government to [authorize](#) the permits themselves.



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The idea sounds good on paper and likely has appeal to New Yorkers desperate for a one-size-fits-all solution to alleviate the pain the crisis has caused their city and state, but it won't work. The push to hand out work permits to illegal aliens is a flailing attempt by elected officials to address the crisis without doing anything about their [anti-border policies](#) that caused the crisis in the first place.

First and foremost, the Biden administration has no authority to unilaterally authorize work permits for thousands of illegal aliens. This would require an act of Congress. In addition to the questionable legality of the proposal, the policy also fails on its merits. If foreign nationals seeking to come to the United States realize they can enter the country illegally and obtain a work permit, this would further incentivize illegal immigration, and exacerbate the crisis at the border.

In [Mexico](#), the minimum wage is less than \$11 a day, while in [New York](#) the minimum wage is \$15 per hour. What reason do aspiring migrants making the trek through Central America have to apply for asylum in Mexico if they know they can simply walk into the United States illegally and obtain a work permit that will allow them to make significantly more money?

This proposal would financially incentivize illegal immigration under the guise of containing it. It would also be devastating for working class Americans in New York and cities across the country. Right now, Americans [are enjoying a solid job](#) market, with wages increasing, particularly for working and lower-middle class Americans. The best way to end the favorable environment working Americans are currently experiencing would be to import large numbers of low-skilled illegal aliens and flood the job market by rewarding them with work permits.

This would force working Americans, already struggling to keep up with the soaring prices of goods and housing, to compete with foreign nationals for these jobs, and would deflate wages across the board. Even if you believe that America needs more immigrants to fill vacant jobs, you should still oppose efforts to grant work visas to those in the country illegally.

For decades, the U.S. asylum process has been used as a sort of labor-importation system. The vast



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majority of the tens of millions of illegal aliens currently residing in the country do not have legitimate asylum claims. They are economic migrants, not victims of political, religious, or racial persecution. The debate over how many migrants the United States should import for work-related purposes is an important one, but is a wholly separate issue from illegal immigration and abuse of the asylum system. Handing out work visas to illegal aliens would further conflate these two issues and continue to erode the rule of law in America's immigration system.

Even if New York and other sanctuary cities are allowed to hand out work permits to illegal aliens, it would not reduce the cities' burdens. Many of these migrants are low-skilled and don't speak our country's predominant language. They are not going to be able to suddenly support themselves overnight. Taxpaying citizens would still be on the hook for their housing, food, and healthcare. The idea to hand out work permits to illegal aliens is a gimmick meant to deflect and distract from the real problems posed by illegal immigration.

It is an unserious solution to a serious problem. Its whole purpose is to help opportunistic politicians cover their backsides and pander to an emerging demographic group, and would not do anything to relieve the burden imposed by the massive influx of illegal aliens into the country.

Eventually, anti-borders politicians are going to have to realize that the only way to stop illegal immigration from hemorrhaging resources from their constituents is to shut down the border. No other solution will suffice, and work permits would only make the situation worse.

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