

Traditionally, immigration policy has been viewed as the specific purview of the national government. State governments have police powers within their borders, but it has generally been the job of the U.S. Congress and the president to craft a national immigration policy. In recent years, most Americans agree that comprehensive immigration reform is needed, but what that reform should look like remains a matter of contention. Some argue that we should streamline the process for would-be immigrants and create a path to citizenship for those unauthorized immigrants who have been living in the United States for a long time. Others contend that we should tighten security on our borders and advocate such measures as increasing the number of border patrol agents, relying more on aerial drones, and building fences along the border. The latter group maintains that the national government has failed to do its job to secure the country's borders. When Texas witnessed a significant increase in unaccompanied minors showing up along its border with Mexico in the summer of 2014, the two views of immigration collided.

Rick Perry, then governor, responded to the influx of unaccompanied children by both calling for national action and mobilizing Texas's National Guard, stating that "Texas can't afford to wait for Washington to act on this crisis."ⁱ President Obama urged Congress to pass reform before it adjourned for the summer, but it failed to do so. Interestingly, both U.S. House Speaker John Boehner and Perry urged the president to undertake unilateral action. As Perry revealed in an interview, "I was like, Mr. President, you can deal with this. You can unilaterally direct the Department of Defense to put those troops on the border."ⁱⁱ

As the state and national government argue over what the appropriate action should be, local governments are getting in on the game. Two Texas counties (Tom Green and Galveston), along with one Texas city (League City), passed resolutions prohibiting even temporary housing of immigrants. Legal specialists declared the resolutions unenforceable, and local leaders noted that the resolutions represent their unhappiness with how the federal government has failed to address the immigration issue.ⁱⁱⁱ

- ★ What responsibility does the federal government have toward immigrants?
- ★ Can states govern immigration policy if they believe the national government is not adequately addressing the issue? Explain your answer.
- ★ What authority, if any, should local governments have to deal with an influx of immigrants?

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- i. David Saleh Rauf, "State Leaders OK Plan to Increase Border Patrol," *Houston Chronicle*, June 18, 2014.
 - ii. "Texas Gov. Perry: Illegal Immigrant Surge a 'Humanitarian Crisis' Obama Can Stop," Fox News, July 10, 2014, www.foxnews.com/politics/2014/07/10/texas-gov-perry-illegal-immigrant-surge-humanitarian-crisis-obama-has-power-to/ (accessed September 12, 2014).
 - iii. Gilad Edelman and Terri Langford, "Texas Cities Pushing Back on Border Surge," *Texas Tribune*, July 21, 2014, www.texastribune.org/2014/07/21/texas-cities-pushing-back-border-surge/ (accessed September 12, 2014).