# Impact of Trump’s deportation plans on LA rebuilding efforts raises concerns



The potential impact of President-elect Donald Trump’s anticipated mass deportation plans on the rebuilding efforts after the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles has emerged as a critical concern among housing policy and immigration researchers. With an estimated 25 individuals having lost their lives due to the wildfires as of mid-January and over 12,000 structures destroyed, the urgency for rebuilding is palpable. As of this date, 90,000 residents were still under evacuation orders, with significant portions of several fires, including the Palisades and Eaton fires, remaining only partially contained.

At the heart of the discussion is the significant role that immigrants, particularly those living in the United States unlawfully, play in California’s construction workforce, which is already grappling with worker shortages. Data from the National Association of Home Builders indicates that immigrants make up approximately 41% of California's construction workforce in 2023, a crucial figure given the ongoing housing shortage in LA County, where a report from Zillow highlighted a deficit of around 337,000 homes as of last year.

Experts indicate that any mass deportation efforts could exacerbate the current construction labour shortage, further inflating costs and hampering the rebuilding process. "When Trump is sworn in, there will be a chilling effect," said Ben Metcalf, a housing policy researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, speaking to Business Insider. He expressed certainty that there would be fewer undocumented workers entering the job market for construction jobs, which would adversely affect recovery efforts.

Eric Finnigan, vice president of demographics research at John Burns Research and Consulting, noted that the removal of immigrant workers could hurt labour availability for those involved in LA’s future regeneration. "Everyone in and around Southern California that’s in the housing market is going to feel this in some way or another," he stated.

The construction sector is presently facing a national labour shortfall estimated at around 500,000 workers, which has already increased building costs, slowed new home construction, and necessitated repairs and renovations. Moreover, projections from housing experts indicate that restricting immigration could further complicate this landscape. Shane Phillips, housing initiative project manager at UCLA’s Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, warned, “fewer workers to build the housing that we need” could lead to vacant homes as family members might be deported.

According to a recent John Burns Research and Consulting survey conducted in December, 61% of home builders anticipate that potential deportations would negatively impact their operations. Meanwhile, 87% voiced concerns regarding Trump's proposals to increase tariffs on imported building materials, which could compound building costs and further hinder recovery efforts.

Notably, undocumented workers are more frequently found in single-family home construction rather than larger apartment projects, as smaller contractors often hire these individuals in responses to irregular regulations. The losses in housing stock due to the wildfires could be particularly detrimental, considering that many of the homes damaged or destroyed were single-family units, an area particularly reliant on such labour.

Chloe East, a fellow at the Brookings Institution focusing on immigration issues, pointed out that a contraction in the immigrant workforce would not only slow construction but also impede opportunities for US-born workers. “When companies cannot find labourers for a building contract, they will also not hire architects and managers for the contract either,” she elaborated.

The possible changes in immigration policy could evoke considerable anxiety across immigrant communities in the United States, especially among those legally working in the industry. Chad Blocker, a Los Angeles-based immigration attorney, highlighted the rising concerns of clients in the construction sector. "The immigration enforcement environment is going to change dramatically," Blocker noted, reflecting the uncertainty fuelling anxiety among immigrant workers.

The future of immigration policy under the Trump administration remains uncertain, with conflicting reports emerging about the actual scope and potential outcomes of deportation efforts. This unpredictability further complicates an already critical situation for those involved in the construction industry and all those affected by the wildfires. Analysts note that while there were high deportation numbers during previous administrations, the swift execution of similar plans remains in question.

As the rebuilding efforts in Los Angeles continue amidst a backdrop of significant housing shortages, the implications of immigration policy are poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the region’s construction landscape in the months and years ahead.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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