

Lucio Featured in the Rio Grande Guardian on U.S. Immigration Policy

Austin, TX – Senator Eddie Lucio (D-Brownsville), shares his thoughts with the Rio Grande Guardian at a press conference hosted by the U.S. Conference of Bishops.

Lucio: U.S. immigration policy discriminates against the poor*

SAN JUAN, RGV – State Sen. Eddie Lucio has voiced concern that the U.S. is making it easier for wealthier immigrants to enter the country and harder for poorer immigrants to come in.

Lucio gave an interview to reporters following a news conference by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, held at the Basilica of our Lady of San Juan del Valle.

“Our immigration system is not only broken, it is chaotic and discriminatory. It discriminates against the poor. If you are rich, if you can contribute in a monetary way, to our country. It is easier to come into the country. For those that are poor, those who are in need, it is pretty dim,” Lucio said.

Speaking about the thousands of Central American immigrants who have arrived at the southern border in recent months seeking asylum to the United States, Lucio said: “They are not going to have an easy time becoming an American citizen, unfortunately.”

Lucio said President Trump’s “zero tolerance” immigration policy, that saw thousands of immigrant families being separated, has caused many people outside of South Texas to view the region as being cruel towards immigrants. He said an unnamed VIP from outside of the Rio Grande Valley who is due to be honored in the region was talking about not visiting because she did not like the anti-immigrant sentiment.

“People from other parts of the state are really upset with our community. But we did not set this policy. That is not who we are. There is one Texan we want to honor and she said, ‘I do not want to go down there. I am concerned about the (Central American) children being detained.’ I told her, I love your heart. You come down here, I will show you around, I will show you what we are about. I have reassured her and now she is coming. She is going to help raise scholarships for needy students.”

Lucio said South Texas families are well aware of the economic contributions immigrants make because so many are either immigrants themselves or have immigrant relatives.

“Those of us that live on the border, those of us that understand the needs of our neighbors, we are family. The way I see it, we need to take care of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who have lost everything, those who have lost family members, whose lives are in danger. In my

opinion, quite frankly, they are not illegal immigrants, they are refugees. They are trying to find a better way of life for their families,” Lucio said.

Asked if he believed the federal government could reunite immigrant families that have been separated due to the Trump Administration’s zero tolerance policy, Lucio said: “I do not believe it can be accomplished any time soon. I think it is going to take months if not years for some young children to finally get reunited with their families. I hope, during this period of time, they can be helped and will not be harmed in any way.”

Lucio said he has been trying to get clearance to visit immigrant detention centers in Brownsville. “We want to sit down and communicate with the children. We want them to know we care,” he said.

Asked about the position of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops towards Central American asylum seekers, Lucio, himself a Catholic, said: “The Conference of Bishops has done a great job at the national and local level. But I want them to flex your muscles a bit more. To win, you have to make sure every Catholic and every Christian makes it clear to our members of Congress, to our president, to our state legislators and governors, throughout the country, that this (zero tolerance) is not the way you do things, that we need to be better neighbors. Jesus Christ said to Peter, feed my lambs. You can put a millions words to that. He was saying, feed my people, my brothers and sisters, If they are hungry feed them, if they are naked, clothe them. If your are pro-life, you should be pro-family.”

Lucio, D-Brownsville, is the third longest-serving member of the Texas Senate. Asked if the Senate panel he chairs – the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations – could get involved in the issue of family separation or immigration policy generally, Lucio said he would like the committee to have a bigger remit on immigration but that would be a decision of the lieutenant governor. However, he did say he would like to see individual states have more say on immigration policy.

“Texas would show far more compassion towards these families that the Administration has shown. We can be a state that shows compassion for the needy, that shows compassion for the oppressed. We can be a state that sends a major resolution to Washington that says, hey, why do you not pass legislation to allow border states to have their own way of dealing with immigration. We would do things differently. We would introduce a guest worker program that would go a long way to allowing people to come here when needed.”

Lucio concluded his interview with reporters by saying: “We have a moral obligation to treat these newly arrived immigrants with dignity and respect. Why can’t we help them get out of harm’s way, they are human beings too.”

* Taylor, Steve. “Lucio: U.S. immigration policy discriminates against the poor.” *Rio Grande Guardian*, 11 July 2018, <https://riograndeguardian.com/lucio-u-s-immigration-policy-discriminates-against-the-poor/>