



Trump's top immigration official reworks the words on the Statue of Liberty

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UPDATED ON: AUGUST 14, 2019 / 4:25 AM / CBS NEWS



The Trump administration's top immigration official reworked the famous words on the Statue of Liberty in an interview Tuesday, saying America will only embrace immigrants who can "stand on their own two feet" and "not become a public charge." In a subsequent interview, Ken Cuccinelli went a step further, saying the poem referred to "people coming from Europe."

His comments came a day after the administration announced a new rule that

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Lazarus, says. Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

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"Uh, they certainly are," Cuccinelli replied. "Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge."

Cuccinelli also claimed that Lazarus' words were put on the Statue of Liberty "at almost the same time" that the U.S. passed its first "public charge" rule for immigration, which he called "very interesting timing" – though he didn't get the timing exactly right. The first public charge law in the U.S. was codified in 1882. Lazarus' poem, "The New Colossus," was written in 1883, and a plaque with her words was not cast on the Statue of Liberty until 1903.

In an interview on CNN Tuesday night, Cuccinelli said the poem was about

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Soon thereafter, former Rep. Beto O'Rourke, a 2020 Democratic presidential hopeful from the Texas border city of El Paso, tweeted, "This administration finally admitted what we've known all along: They think the Statue of Liberty only applies to white people."

The Trump administration's new "public charge" rule will make it more difficult for low-income immigrants to secure permanent residency or temporary visas if they are deemed likely to rely on welfare benefits, such as food stamps or subsidized housing. It is a substantial expansion of America's longstanding "public charge" laws, which can restrict immigration for foreigners who are determined to be burdens on taxpayers.

Studies by the Urban Institute said millions of American-born children of immigrants will be affected the new rule, and it could lead to families avoiding

public benefits they need out of fear that it could hurt their immigration status.

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The new rule is set to go into effect October 15.

When Cuccinelli announced the change on Monday, CBS News Radio correspondent Steven Portnoy asked him if he stood by the words on the Statue of Liberty.

"Is that sentiment — 'Give us your tired, your poor' — still operative in the United States, or should those words come down?" Portnoy asked.

"I'm certainly not prepared to take anything down off the Statue of Liberty," Cuccinelli replied.

Trump administration officials have been challenged before about the Statue of

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"I don't want to get off into a whole thing about history here, but the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of liberty enlightening the world," Miller said. "It's a symbol of American liberty lighting the world. The poem that you're referring to was added later, it's not actually part of the original Statue of Liberty."

First published on August 13, 2019 / 12:38 PM

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