



## **Buckle Up Journalists! (Part Four)**

**2024 may be a 'wild ride'**

**By**

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We are 'leaping' as it were into a new year of big news stories. I'm sharing thoughts on some of them each Tuesday during January. You can read previous news topics [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Let's move next to the **Immigration 'Crisis,' Citizen Migration, Health, and Education.**

## Immigration ‘Crisis’

Many states are taking the immigration ‘crisis’ (their words) into their own hands. Republican Governor Greg Abbot of Texas recently signed a bill into law that would make unauthorized border crossings a state crime. It could take effect this March. I say ‘could’ because the Department of Justice says it may file a lawsuit against Texas to stop them

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The Justice Department said it would file a lawsuit against SB4 if Texas did not assure federal officials by Jan. 3 that the state would refrain from enforcing the law as planned in March, according to a letter sent to Gov. Greg Abbott on Dec. 28 and obtained by CBS News. In addition to creating illegal entry crimes at the state level, the law would allow Texas judges to issue de facto deportation orders. [CBS News](#)

Other governors and legislators, Republican and Democrat, are complaining that the [hundreds of thousands of immigrants](#) coming into the U.S. from the southern border are overwhelming their ability to meet migrant needs, while still trying to meet the needs of American citizens who have lived in their states for years.

Some mayors near the southern border have made emergency declarations to try to deal with the challenges of illegal drugs and human trafficking they face. If you are a journalist covering a border community, what kind of stories are you doing? Are you telling the story through the lives of real people or just officials? How is the immigrant situation affecting business and home owners in your coverage area?

Some Republican border state governors have bussed or flown immigrants to northern Democrat-controlled 'sanctuary' cities which has led to many lawsuits filed to stop the practice. Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson is an example of one Democrat mayor who is suing bus companies that are delivering immigrants to Chicago. New York Mayor Eric Adams has called the immigration problem in his city a 'crisis.' These and other mayors are asking for more federal help to

deal with the ‘surge’ of asylum seekers arriving in their cities

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The mayors of New York, Chicago and Denver on Wednesday renewed their calls for federal assistance to address the surge in asylum seekers entering their cities on buses and flights chartered by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott amid the Republican's feud over immigration with the Biden administration. [UPI News](#)

Is anything like that happening where you live? What does your audience think about it? What can city leaders do about it?

Many American workers are complaining that the current administration's plan to give Temporary Protected Status to hundreds of thousands of immigrants will make it even more difficult for American citizens to find jobs. Is that happening in your area? If so, what kind of stories can you tell this year to help everyone understand the personal and community impact? Some even believe that the current administration has made the choice [‘not’ to enforce](#) immigration laws already on the books.

What's it like to be an immigrant who crossed the southern border? Tell their story so viewers better understand why they left their country to come to the U.S. What do they hope to accomplish by living in America? How have Americans treated them? Who is helping them and who's not?

What's it like to be an American citizen and watch as immigrants cross the southern border and receive benefits that a citizen is not entitled to receive. Fair? Unfair? How are citizens dealing with millions of immigrants pouring through the southern border and being bussed or flown to cities across the country? How are citizens dealing with billions of tax dollars being spent on immigrants crossing the southern border?

What about immigrants who went through the long process of becoming 'legal' immigrants? Do they think what's happening on the southern border is fair to them and others like them? What do they suggest in answer to the challenge?

Another concern that many citizens are raising is the fear that terrorists are sneaking into the country through the southern border. Some ranchers in Arizona and other states are pointing to cartel members, possible terrorists, and fighting-aged young men from scores of other nations who are successfully crossing the border.

Some analysts believe the best solution to the immigration crises is to ‘increase’ legal immigration —

Increasing legal immigration and creating more legal pathways for peaceful, hard-working migrants to come to America is the only way to solve the border crisis for good. One strategy for doing that is to allow for more employer sponsorship, getting rid of caps on work visas and letting the market dictate how many migrant workers it can take. [Newsweek](#)

Be fair and impartial in your reporting. Be truthful and thorough. A journalist’s job is to tell the ‘whole’ story, not just the part with which they agree. Immigration is one of the biggest stories of recent years and will continue to be in 2024. Stay on top of it and how it affects your community.



## Citizen Migration

Tens of thousands of American citizens are on the move. They are leaving what they refer to as ‘liberal’ or ‘socialist’ states and moving to what they hope will be better places to raise their families. Some people move to nearby states (e.g. Nevada, Idaho, Arizona); others move across the country (e.g. Texas, Florida, Tennessee).

Is that happening in your community? Are people leaving your state? If so, find some to interview before they leave. What was their main reason for moving? Are they moving to your state? If so, why? What was their main reason for moving? How have their decisions affected your local community?

We’ve been reading or watching stories about this ‘citizen migration’ for at least the past two or three years. I’ve seen or read many stories about local reaction from people who hope the migration doesn’t end up changing the communities where they live. Here’s a recent example —

Retired California public employees are flocking to Idaho with their pension funds and becoming the financial "lifeblood" of at least one Idaho town, ruffling feathers with some locals who are taking issue with the "liberal baggage" of the new residents.

The Los Angeles Times reported this month the town of Eagle, Idaho, has seen an influx of retired cops and firefighters moving to their town with many of them identifying as conservative but who "seem practically socialist to the old guard" with their large pensions. [Fox News](#)

Journalists, keep your eye on this story in 2024. Many people have expressed concerns about how 'citizen migration' could affect elections, in addition to changing the landscape of smaller communities.

## Health

The last few years have been tough on the health of Americans. Many people lack trust in the 'health' community, which means they lack trust in doctors, pharmaceutical companies, and others in the medical community. That has led to a 'physician shortage' even as the medical needs of an aging population increase.

The American Medical Association's president, Dr. Jesse M. Ehrenfeld recently called the physician shortage a "public health crisis."

"It's an urgent crisis, hitting every corner of this country – urban and rural," Ehrenfeld told reporters at a press conference in October, "with the most direct impact hitting families with high needs and limited means." NPR

Is this a problem in your coverage area? If so, how is it affecting community health? Talk with doctors, hospitals, and real people to find out. If some of your coverage area includes rural areas, how are physician shortages and hospital closures affecting the health of people living in those areas?

This report is about six-months old, but still makes a current point. Rural hospitals and the people who depend on them are facing tough times —

There are 646 rural hospitals at risk of closure due to financial issues, comprising around 30 percent of all rural hospitals in the U.S., according to the Center for Healthcare Quality & Payment Reform.

The hospitals face losses on patient services as health plans aren't paying enough to cover the cost of care delivery. The losses will likely increase as inflation and workforce shortages persist, according to the report, which was released in April. While rural hospitals are receiving some support through grants, local tax revenues or other profits, they still have low financial reserves and remain at risk.

More than half the states in the U.S. report 25 percent or more of their rural hospitals are at risk of closure, and more than 200 hospitals nationwide are at immediate risk of closing. [Becker's Hospital CFO Report](#)

Click on the ‘Becker’s’ link above to see what’s happening in your state. Also, check into the number of medical doctors, clinics, and specialists who are leaving rural areas for better-paying positions in cities. What about doctors, nurses, and other health professionals retiring? What does 2024 look like for rural areas in your coverage area? Be sure to tell your stories through the lives of real people. That is ‘that important’ part of ‘Real Journalism.’

What about health insurance? Many companies are charging their employees more and providing less medical care to cut costs. How is that affecting people in your community? What about increases in Medicare and cuts to Medicaid? How are those affecting your audience?

What about prescription costs? Increases in medical care costs? Are people in your audience cutting other expenses or cutting health care? Talk with real people and find out.

Another health concern in the United States is how to provide healthcare for the hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants coming into the country each month. Some state are doing it with tax-payer dollars —

A growing number of states are opening taxpayer-funded health insurance programs to immigrants, including those living in the U.S. without authorization, even as Republicans assail President Joe Biden over a dramatic increase in illegal crossings of the southern border.

Eleven states and Washington, D.C., together provide full health insurance coverage to more than 1 million low-income immigrants regardless of their legal status, according to state data compiled by KFF Health News. Most aren't authorized to live in the U.S., state officials say.

Enrollment in these programs could nearly double by 2025 as at least seven states initiate or expand coverage. In January, Republican-controlled Utah will start covering children regardless of immigration status, while New York and California will widen eligibility to cover more adults. [NPR](#)

What's happening in your state? Your coverage area? What does your audience think about this tax-payer provision? What about the medical community? Can doctors and hospitals handle the increase in patients and costs? How long will taxpayer dollars be available to pay for immigrant healthcare before money runs out for American citizens?

Also, keep your eyes on a report expected this May by the *World Health Organization* (WHO) that could have a major impact on the future of pandemic and other health-related responses —

Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) continued their discussions towards a global accord on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, with a view to presenting the outcome of their work to the World Health Assembly in May 2024. [World Health Organization](#)

The head of the WHO says the world needs to properly prepare for future pandemics after finally ending three years of Covid "crisis, pain and loss,"

In his end-of-year message, World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said 2023 had marked a turning point in fighting major health challenges but had also brought "immense and avoidable suffering."

As he closed out the WHO's 75th year, Ghebreyesus said that in terms of emergency preparedness and response, gaps remain in the world's readiness to prevent the next pandemic.

"But 2024 offers a unique opportunity to address these gaps," he said, with countries negotiating the first-ever global agreement on pandemic threats.

"The pandemic accord is being designed to bridge the gaps in global collaboration, cooperation and equity," said Ghebreyesus. [Independent Online](#) (IOL)

How might the new 'global accord' affect the health organizations in your coverage area? Talk with doctors, hospital administrators, medical clinic operators, pharmacists, and patients to share their thoughts and tell their stories.



## Education

Education is big news in local communities, states, and the federal government. What are the biggest concerns in your community or state? What about K-12? Colleges? Universities? Student loan payoffs? How about the issue of public vs. private education? School vouchers? Homeschooling? School security? Biological males competing against biological females in traditionally 'female' athletics? Biological boys and girls sharing same bathrooms, showers, changing rooms, dorm rooms, etc?

Another story that is similar to the **Health** category above is the cost of educating undocumented immigrants in your state and local community. Here's a report from last summer —

The U.S. Departments of Justice and Education are putting public schools on notice that immigrant children and youth are entitled to a free public education, regardless of their immigration status.

The two agencies published fact sheets earlier this month reminding families and educators of the rights immigrant students—specifically migratory children and unaccompanied minors—have when it comes to receiving a public education.

It's a reminder advocates and researchers say is needed as more immigrant students are expected to enroll in the coming years, and as they continue to face challenges in accessing quality education. [Education Week](#)

What does your audience think about providing public education to undocumented immigrants at tax-payer expense? What about the education community? Can educators and school systems handle the increase in students and costs?

Another issue is undocumented immigrant students getting federal financial aid for college, including Pell grants or student loans. Allowing immigrant students to pay in-state tuition costs is another tax-payer issue in [some states](#).

Here's another 'education' issue you may want to cover. ProPublica had an interesting article earlier this month about a challenge in public education that many people may not have considered -

### **Skipping School: America's Hidden Education Crisis**

Absenteeism has nearly doubled since the pandemic. With state and federal governments largely abdicating any role in getting kids back into classrooms, some schools have turned to private companies for a reimagined version of the truant officer. [ProPublica](#)

What's happening in your coverage area? Is 'skipping school' a big problem in your local school systems? Are public schools hiring private companies to get kids back in class? If so, at what cost and who is paying for it?

2024 will certainly have many education stories for you to cover. Be sure to talk to all sides of these issues and tell as many of your stories through real people as you can.



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