

The Sentinel

Cato's numbers show immigration reform needed

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A detailed analysis of U.S. immigration laws by the Cato Institute is alarming: Less than 1 percent of potential immigrants — of men and women who attempt to begin the process to legally immigrate to the United States — are able to complete the process and relocate to the U.S. “The myth that legal immigration is relatively easy or a matter of simply waiting a few years persists,” writes Cato’s David J. Bier. “The focus then becomes solely on how to deal with the symptom of the restrictions — people crossing illegally — rather than the restrictions themselves, and legal immigration reforms fall to the wayside.” For about a century, there were virtually no limitations placed on immigration. For another several decades until 1924, our immigration laws were modeled to presume eligibility for permanent residence unless the immigrant fit into specific, narrowly tailored categories. “In 1924, this presumption was flipped,” Bier writes. “Today, all immigrants are presumed to be ineligible, and the burden shifted from the government to the immigrant to prove that they fall into certain narrow, eligible categories.” As Bier and the Cato Institute note, closing avenues of legal immigration funnels increasingly desperate people into doing what many say we most do not want them to do — attempt to immigrate to the U.S. illegally, whether by crossing the border without documentation or by overstaying a tourism or other temporary visa. We agree that illegal immigration is an untenable situation. We recognize the need for border security and for investigation, enforcement and apprehension of illegal immigrants. But we also agree with the Cato Institute. We admire the institute’s commitment to skepticism about the size and scope of government. We recognize, along with the Cato Institute, that arbitrary and cumbersome limits on men, women and families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to pursue life, liberty and happiness are in fact invasive and excessive “big government.” And we join the Cato Institute in calling for immigration reform, in amending our laws so good people have better opportunities to openly join our society and embrace its commitment to freedom and liberty.