Rand Paul is right: We should quadruple employment-based legal immigration

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July 12, 2019

Birth rates are down, death rates are rising, and in the not-too-distant future, all net population growth in the U.S. will come from immigration. Yet some conservatives, such as President Trump, somehow still think our country is "full" and that we should *decrease* levels of legal immigration.

Luckily, some Republicans get it. Sen. Rand Paul just introduced a bill that would substantially increase high-skill immigration and boost legal immigration rates overall. His plan is compelling, and all conservatives should get on board.

Paul's proposal increases the total number of employment-based visas allotted to 270,000 from 140,000, and extends this authorization to the spouses and teenage children of immigrants as well. Because of the inclusion of family members, the net impact of this proposal would be to nearly quadruple the total number of labor-based immigrants admitted under our immigration laws.

Even though immigration opponents like Tucker Carlson might clutch their pearls, this increase in high-skill immigration would almost certainly be a net positive for our country.

Nearly 85% of Americans think legal immigration is a good thing, and it's easy to see why. Legal immigrants are our neighbors, colleagues, and friends. They contribute substantially more in tax revenue than they take in government benefits, and they have a net positive impact on our economy. This effect is far more pronounced for high-skill immigrants. According to the Cato Institute, the average college-educated legal immigrant is worth between $210,000 and $345,000 on net to all levels of government in the U.S.

Additionally, Cato's David Bier says Paul's proposal "would make the United States far more competitive for foreign talent than current law, prevent the removal of hundreds of thousands of skilled workers" and "benefit the U.S. economy enormously."

But what about the argument that increasing immigration hurts American workers? Well, of course there are sometimes adverse effects, but this narrative largely rings false, especially with respect to skilled immigrants. We're experiencing a labor shortage right now, with record-low unemployment and not enough qualified laborers in key specialized areas such as medicine. As of January, there were 7.3 *million* open jobs in America.

So why not hike legal immigration?

Given that legal immigrants are significantly <u>less likely</u> to commit crimes than native-born Americans and have traditionally assimilated well, it's clear a boost in high-skill immigration is a win-win. And what's more, how difficult it is to immigrate to the United States is a main cause of illegal immigration and the current crisis on our southern border. Rolling back restrictions to legal immigration is a surefire way to make sure more of those who enter our country come here legally, to the benefit of all involved.

Even immigration skeptics like President Trump should see this. If the GOP wants to succeed in 2020 and beyond, it must both work to address illegal immigration and border security but also make it clear that lawful immigrants are welcome. Paul's new plan to increase high-skill immigration would do just that.