

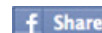
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[Cato Institute Briefing Disabused Immigration Reform Myths](#)

Libertarian think tank the [Cato Institute](#) trooped down to Capitol Hill last Friday to deliver a briefing entitled “[Answering the Critics of Comprehensive Immigration Reform](#),” a guide on how to rebut five myths commonly invoked by immigration reform opponents.

The briefing featured Stuart Anderson, Adjunct Scholar at the Cato Institute and author of the report, and Frank Sharry, Executive Director here at America's Voice. Moderating was Laura Renz, Government Affairs Manager at Cato.

The briefing began by focusing on the contents of the [report](#), as Anderson debunked the common misconceptions surrounding immigration reform:



- Argument #1: Immigration reform will harm taxpayers
 - Response: We have to compare the status quo to what a change in policy would mean. When workers become legalized, their income sharply rises, which leads to large increases in tax revenue. When you compare the effects of tighter border enforcement to the effects of a legalization program, the net gain to U.S. households is estimated to be \$260 billion.
- Argument #2: Newly legalized immigrants will burden the welfare rolls
 - Response: Immigrants are not heavy users of welfare, and additional limits can be placed on legalized workers.
- Argument #3: Amnesty will beget more amnesty
 - Response: Amnesty means no stipulations, and we can attach stipulations (fines, taxes) to any legalization program. Furthermore, economists saw no discernible difference in immigration before and after the amnesty of 1986.
- Argument #4: Legalizing more immigrants will undermine U.S. culture and the English language
 - Response: Well over 90% of Latino immigrants say that it's more important to be learning English than retaining Spanish. By the third generation, Americanization actually becomes a problem, where kids would benefit from being bilingual but no longer know Spanish.
- Argument #5: Legalization means more unemployment for the native born
 - Response: Immigration makes the American economy more effective and does not increase the unemployment rate.

Sharry then followed with an analysis of current political conditions and the political climate that would be necessary for passing reform. Styling illegal immigration as a “hundred-year story” of “supply and demand”, Sharry pointed out that there has always been and will always be immigrants willing to weather hardship to come to America in search of better opportunity. What's more, Americans need the benefits these immigrants provide, unless we want to be “importing food and exporting jobs.”

Republicans who stand in the way of reform, then, are standing on the wrong side of history. Sharry pointed out that a McCain-Kennedy [immigration bill](#), voted on

in 2006, garnered 23 Republican votes, while the much more narrowly focused [DREAM Act](#) bill that failed last December garnered only three. Too many Republicans these days, Sharry said, are like Rep. [Lamar Smith](#) (R-TX): overly fixated with enforcement and mistaken in their belief that bills like [E-Verify](#) will be a cure-all.

Sharry said:

The enforcement people claim that in ten to twenty years, [through E-Verify and attrition] we will rid ourselves of most of these [undocumented immigrants.] Do they really think this is going to stop the problem? Or is it just going to drive people further underground?

The only solution, according to Sharry, is a centrist approach:

We don't need to stop immigration, we need to regulate it. I'm all for controlled, orderly immigration...we can use enforcement at the border and enforcement in hiring practices. We can open wider channels for temporary workers and deal realistically with non-criminal immigrants who are already here. Comprehensive immigration reform is not either/or, it's both/and. We can have a legal immigration system that grows the economy AND is more fair.

Sharry called immigration a "lifeblood" to the American economy and said that "free market principles" will eventually demand a more sensible approach to immigration. Ultimately, he said, "demographic, economic, and political force" will lead to reform.

The only question is when.

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