

Media Conservatives Disregard Economic Benefits Of Immigration Reform

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The right-wing media is attacking President Obama for discussing immigration reform rather than focusing on the economy, but researchers have estimated that immigration reform can add \$1.5 trillion to GDP and create 900,000 jobs.

Studies Show That Comprehensive Immigration Reform Will Boost The Economy And Create Jobs

IPC: Comprehensive Immigration Reform Could Generate "750,000 To 900,000 Jobs" And Increase GDP By \$1.5 Trillion. In a report prepared for the American Immigration Council's Immigration Policy Center and the Center for American Progress, UCLA's Dr. Raul Hinojosa-Ojeda concluded that comprehensive immigration reform could add .84 percent to GDP each year, amounting to "at least \$1.5 trillion in added GDP" over a ten-year period. He also concluded that comprehensive immigration reform could "generate \$4.5 to \$5.4 billion in additional net tax revenue" over a three-year period. According to Hinojosa-Ojeda:

[A]n increase in personal income of this scale would generate consumer spending sufficient to support 750,000 to 900,000 jobs. [Raising The Floor For American Workers: The Economic Benefits Of Comprehensive Immigration Reform, [January 2010](#)]

Economist Cowen: "Allowing In More Immigrants, Skilled And Unskilled" Would "Create Jobs." In a *New York Times* opinion piece titled "How Immigrants Create More Jobs," George Mason economist Tyler Cowen wrote that "it turns out that the continuing arrival of immigrants to American shores is encouraging business activity here, thereby producing more jobs, according to a new study." Cowen cited the research of economists at the University of California, Davis and at Bocconi University in Italy. According to Cowen:

We see the job-creating benefits of trade and immigration every day, even if we don't always recognize them. As other papers by Professor [Giovanni] Peri have shown, low-skilled immigrants usually fill gaps in American labor markets and generally enhance domestic business prospects rather than destroy jobs; this occurs because of an important phenomenon, the presence of what are known as "complementary" workers, namely those who add value to the work of others. An immigrant will often take a job as a construction worker, a drywall installer or a taxi driver, for example, while a native-born worker may end up being promoted to supervisor. And as immigrants succeed here, they help the United States develop strong business and social networks with the rest of the world, making it easier for us to do business with India, Brazil and most other countries, again creating more jobs.

[...]

The current skepticism has deadlocked prospects for immigration reform, even though no one is particularly happy with the status quo. Against that trend, we should be looking to immigration as a creative force in our economic favor. Allowing in more immigrants, skilled and unskilled, wouldn't just create jobs. It could increase tax revenue, help finance **Social Security**, bring new home buyers and improve the business environment. [*The New York Times*, [10/30/10](#)]

Cato Study: Comprehensive Immigration Reform Could Boost GDP By \$180 Billion. After describing the negative impact reducing the number of low-skilled immigrant workers in the U.S. would have on the income of U.S. households, researchers Peter B. Dixon and Maureen T. Rimmer said that "legalization of low-skilled immigrant workers would yield significant income gains for American workers and households," and concluded that immigration reform could increase GDP by \$180 billion. [Cato Institute, *Restriction or Legalization? Measuring the Economic Benefits of Immigration Reform*, [9/13/09](#)]

NFAP: Low Number Of H-1B Visas "Likely" Pushes "More Work To Other Countries." In a policy brief by the National Foundation for American Policy, researchers estimated that technology companies hire five workers for every one high-skilled employee hired under a temporary, H-1B visa, which the researchers concluded was "further evidence that the current restrictions on high skill immigration are counterproductive." They also noted:

Preventing companies from hiring foreign nationals by maintaining an artificially low limit on H-1B visas is likely to produce the unintended consequence of pushing more work to other countries. Sixty-five percent of technology companies responding to an NFAP survey said in response to the lack of H-1B visas they had "hired more people (or outsourced work) outside the United States." [National Foundation for American Policy, [March 2008](#)]

Nevertheless, Right-Wing Media Tell Obama To Drop Immigration Reform And Focus On The Economy

Bolling Slams Obama For Focusing On Immigration Given Economic Conditions. Guest hosting *Glenn Beck*, Fox News' Eric Bolling criticized Obama for focusing on immigration reform and claimed:

So, let me get this straight. Gas prices are spiking up 116 percent in the last two years, unemployment raging with 14 million people out of work in America, bank sales account for record 34 percent of all home sales, and America is choking on \$14 trillion in debt that threatens the republic. Yet, immigration is his focus. Hmm, some leadership, Mr. President. [Fox News, *Glenn Beck*, 5/10/11, transcript via Nexis]

Bolling: Immigration Reform "Can't Be Good For The Economy Any Way You Slice It." From *Glenn Beck* with Eric Bolling guest hosting:

BOLLING: Hey, Juan, we're broke. America is broke. We have \$14 trillion in the hole. We're trying to figure out what's going on with health care. If we had 11 million or whatever number that he's proposing - - if we had 11 million, 10 million, 5 million more onto the health care rolls, onto, you know, taking the jobs from people who need jobs, this can't be good for the economy any way you slice it. [Fox News, *Glenn Beck*, 5/10/11, transcript via Nexis]

Dobbs: "There Isn't A Soul" Who Could Argue Lack Of Immigration Reform Has "Had An Effect On" Jobs, GDP. From Fox Business' *Lou Dobbs Tonight*:

DOBBS: Economy, the economy is number one: creating jobs, creating wealth. Where in the world is this president on those most pressing issues?

[...]

ROBERT ZIMMERMAN (Democratic strategist): The travesty of our immigration laws, and the failure to really have a comprehensive program is hurting the economy. Obviously border and port security has got to be a priority in this process --

DOBBS: Wait a minute, wait a minute, when you say it's hurting the economy, we've got 15 seconds. How many jobs has it cost? How much has it reduced GDP? There isn't a soul in the world who could argue it has had an effect on either. [Fox Business, *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, 5/11/11]

Hanretty: Obama Should Focus "Laser-Like" On Economy, Not Immigration. From the May 10 edition of *America's Newsroom*:

HEATHER NAUERT: There was an NBC poll that came out that said 60% disapprove of the President's handling of the economy. So should the President be focusing on immigration right now?

KAREN HANRETTY: No. I think Republicans and Democrats should be focused laser-like on the economy, on jobs, on what the American people are most concerned about right now. Immigration, we all know, is a political hot button issue, there's not likely to be any consensus or real debate between now and the elections in 2012. [Fox News, *America's Newsroom*, 5/10/11]

Hume Suggests Obama Is Discussing Immigration To Distract From Economy. From Brit Hume's commentary on *Special Report*:

There's not much legislative logic in the president's push for immigration reform at this moment. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor wondered why the president was even bringing the issue up.

The political logic though is clear. Mr. Obama made much of the issue in 2008 but has done little since, and Hispanic groups which did much to help him back then are not amused. Plus the issue tends to divide Republicans as George W. Bush found when his immigration reform effort collapsed amid cries of amnesty from his right. But the immigration maneuver is not a sign of political strength for this president. His bin Laden triumph has buoyed his standing for the moment, but his other political fundamentals are weak. The first quarter economic growth was anemic at 1.8 percent and last month's job growth was insufficient even to keep the unemployment rate from ticking up. And there is genuinely terrible news from the housing market with foreclosures continuing apace and prices still declining.

The voters may nod in agreement when Mr. Obama says these economic woes began on Mr. Bush's watch. But they will also nod when Republicans say Mr. Obama was elected to fix them and has not. Not only that, Mr. Obama has run up trillions in new debt and hasn't fixed that either. And that may help explain why he's talking now about immigration. [Fox News, *Special Report*, 5/10/11, transcript via Nexis]

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