

# ALABAMA POLITICAL REPORTER

## **Alabama has small but growing immigrant population**

Chip Brownlee

October 16, 2018

Alabama has a smaller immigrant population than many other states, but the immigrant population is growing and several industries rely heavily upon immigrants for labor, according to an analysis from the American Immigration Council.

As the Trump Administration continues to implement hard-line policies, including family separation, asylum crackdowns and travel bans, immigration remains a top issue as the November midterm elections near.

Immigrants represent nearly 4 percent of Alabama's total population. In 2015, 169,972 foreign-born individuals lived in Alabama. Another 3 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens who have at least one immigrant parent, according to the analysis. About a third of Alabama's immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens. Another 30,000 are eligible to become naturalized, the analysis found.

As the number of immigrants living in Alabama grows, it's still lagging behind other states. Georgia, for example, has an immigrant population that comprises 10 percent of its total population. About 17 percent of Texas's population is immigrants, and in California, the number is even higher at 27.3 percent.

### **State, Mo Brooks sue to block counting of immigrants in 2020 census**

Alabama has sued the U.S. Census Bureau, seeking to block the counting of undocumented immigrants in the 2020 census. Alabama officials fear Alabama could lose a congressional seat

when reapportionment happens because Alabama's total population growth is slower than many other states.

According to documents obtained through a public records request, the Alabama Attorney General's Office has spent at least \$4,914 paying the Center for Immigration Studies, an anti-immigration think tank, for a demographic analysis of all 50 states to determine how immigrant populations make affect reapportionment.

A number of the Center for Immigration Studies' reports have been disputed by other groups such as the Migration Policy Institute, the libertarian Cato Institute, PolitiFact and the Immigration Policy Center. The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated CIS as an anti-immigrant hate group.

While the population is relatively small, industry relies heavily upon immigrant labor. Almost 13 percent of all workers in life, physical, and social sciences are immigrants, as are 12 percent of construction and extraction employees, according to the American Immigration Council's analysis.

While a large portion of immigrants living in Alabama are naturalized citizens or legal residents, the analysis showed that nearly 40,000 U.S. citizens in Alabama are living with at least one family member who is undocumented. About 39 percent of the immigrant population — or 1.3 percent of the state population in 2014 — is undocumented.

More than 100,932 immigrant workers comprise about 5 percent of Alabama's workforce, the analysis showed. The top industries for immigrant workers are manufacturing, construction, accommodation and food services, retail trade and health care.

Immigrants paid \$719.7 million in federal taxes and \$252.6 million in state and local taxes in 2014, and, as consumers, they spent \$2.7 billion on Alabama's economy. As entrepreneurs, immigrants in Alabama generated \$179.3 million in business revenue in 2015.

Undocumented immigrants, despite their legal status, paid more than \$62.3 million in state and local taxes in 2014, the analysis found, and that contribution would rise to \$80 million if they achieved legal status. Those who had enrolled in President Barack Obama's DACA program paid an estimated \$13.2 million in state and local taxes in 2016.

All in all, immigrants have \$2.7 billion in spending power.

The American Immigration Council drew from U.S. Census data and other sources to develop their analysis, which provides the latest demographic and economic contributions of immigrants in each U.S. state.