



Letter: Statistics show another side of immigration debate

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We are being told repeatedly that undocumented immigrants are dangerous criminals who come here to get free social benefits like Medicaid and food stamps. We are told they don't pay taxes and are bankrupting the country. Perhaps it is time to look at some facts.

A study by the University of San Diego found that up to 75 percent of unauthorized immigrants pay federal, state and local taxes, about the same percentage as native-born. For example, the Texas State Comptroller reported in 2006 that the 1.4 million illegal immigrants in Texas added almost \$18 billion to the gross state product and contributed \$1.6 billion in state revenue, while costing the state about \$1.2 billion in services used.

Furthermore, the Chief Actuary of the Social Security Administration estimates that earnings by unauthorized immigrants result in a net positive effect on Social Security financial status generally, and that this effect contributed roughly \$12 billion to the cash flow of the program for 2010. He goes on to state that the Social Security system has grown increasingly reliant on this stream of revenue. Undocumented workers contribute based upon fake Social Security cards. Undocumented people can't collect Social Security benefits. If someday they become a citizens, they will get no credit for all the years they contributed while undocumented.

The National Immigration Forum points out that, contrary to what many have said, undocumented immigrants do not qualify for welfare, food stamps, Medicaid or Social Security and most other public benefits. Most of these programs require proof of legal immigration status, and under the 1996 welfare law, even legal immigrants cannot receive these benefits until they have been in the United States for more than five years.

According to a study published in the March 25 issue of the journal Criminology, states with more undocumented immigrants tended to have lower crime rates.

A recent Cato Institute study found that in Texas in 2015, the rate of convictions per 100,000 illegal immigrants was 16 percent lower below that of native-born Americans. The illegal immigrant conviction rate for homicide was 44 percent below that of native-born Americans. Texas is the only state that tracks specific crime rates for the undocumented.

In a labor force snapshot from 2012-2013, as published in Money Magazine, Harvard economics professor Borjas found that about 87 percent of male illegal immigrants worked, compared to 74 percent of American men. They also are willing to work regardless of what they get paid. Even after controlling for the fact that this immigrant population was likely to be made up of younger men, he still found a 10-percentage-point difference between the two groups.

So, the evidence is clear that undocumented people contribute positively to our economy, have a lower crime rate and lower unemployment rate than native-born, and don't qualify for public benefits like food stamps. Perhaps the crisis at the border is not much of a crisis after all? Perhaps we don't have to lock up women and children in cages or tent cities at the border?

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