



# The U.S. Jobs That Went to Immigrants

By: Michael Volpe – July 9, 2013

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A new report concludes that immigrants accounted for all the employment gains in the US labor market from 2000-2013. The report challenges the notion that immigration helps the economy, a common argument by those who favor comprehensive immigration reform, and S. 744, the recently passed Senate immigration bill, specifically.

The report was commissioned by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), and it was written by Steven A. Camarota, the director of research at CIS, and Karen Zeigler, a demographer. It concluded that the native-born population accounted for two-thirds of overall growth in the working-age population (16 to 65), but none of the net growth in employment among the working-age has gone to natives. As the report stated:

While jobs are always being created and lost, and the number of workers rises and falls with the economy, a new analysis of government data shows that all of the net gain in employment over the last 13 years has gone to immigrants (legal and illegal). From the first quarter of 2000 to the first quarter of 2013, the number of natives working actually fell by 1.3 million while the overall size of the working-age (16 to 65) native population increased by 16.4 million. Over the same time period, the number of immigrants working (legal and illegal) increased by 5.3 million.

The study also found that the native percentage of the working population has decreased by nearly 15% in the last decade.

Even before the recession, when the economy was expanding (2000 to 2007), 60 percent of the net increase in employment among the working-age went to immigrants, even though they accounted for just 38 percent of population growth among the working-age population.

Speaking with the Washington Times, Alex Nowrath, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute, challenged the findings of the CIS study. Mr. Nowrath concluded that immigrants and natives rarely compete for the same jobs because both groups end up specializing in different niches.

In April, Florida Senator Marco Rubio sent a letter to David Addington of the Heritage Foundation in which he stated that his current immigration reform plan would be an economic boon by shifting the immigration population to include more skilled workers:

As I consider the potential impact of immigration reform, I am keenly aware that there will be budgetary impacts when illegal immigrants begin to access citizenship beginning 13 years after immigration reform is enacted. However, I also believe that immigration reform that shifts the mix of legal immigration away from family-based toward highly-skilled/merit based combined with bringing millions of undocumented aliens out of the underground economy will improve the labor market, increase entrepreneurship and create jobs, leading to a net increase in economic growth and reducing the deficit.

The CIS study comes as the fate of immigration reform remains up in the air even as S. 744 passed the US Senate in June. Immigration reform now moves to the US House of Representatives which is currently considering a number of immigration reform bills, all of which are currently much less ambitious.

At roughly the same time the Senate was passing S. 744, the Judiciary Committee for the US House of Representatives passed the Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement Act (SAFE). SAFE is an enforcement-only bill that not only makes being in the country illegally a federal crime (it's currently only an administrative violation), but would provide more authority to local and state officials to make immigration-related arrests.

SAFE is one of four immigration-related bills making its way through the House of Representatives. All four are significantly less ambitious than what has passed in the Senate.

Media reports claimed that a House counterpart to the Senate's "Gang of 8" was close to agreeing to their own version of comprehensive immigration reform, but that has yet to materialize.

If any of the four bills currently making their way in the House passes, the House and Senate would conference. In that case, the ambitious Senate bill would have to be reconciled with the much less ambitious bill from the House. If nothing passes in the House, immigration reform will die.

The current Senate version of immigration reform is more than one thousand pages long. Despite what Nancy Pelosi once said, it's much better if the public knows what's in the bill before any bill passes. Now that immigration reform has reached the House of Representatives, it's important that the issues be fully debated and analyzed. The true nature of benefits from immigration are chief among the issues that should be discussed and debated.