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August 14, 2009

Cato Institute Report: Restriction or Legalization? Measuring the Economic Benefits of Immigration Reform

In a report released yesterday, [Restriction or Legalization? Measuring the Economic Benefits of Immigration Reform](#), the **Cato Institute** seeks to quantify the benefits that would flow to the U.S. economy from comprehensive immigration reform which grants some form of legal status to unauthorized immigrants already living in the United States. The report constructs seven statistical models to simulate various immigration policy options that run the gamut from enforcement-only strategies along the border and at the workplace, to the legalization of currently unauthorized immigrants and creation of legal channels for future immigrant workers that accommodate actual U.S. labor demand.

The report concludes that "compared to either border or interior enforcement, a policy of legalization would, over time, raise the incomes of U.S. workers and their families."

- A program to grant legal status to unauthorized workers already in the United States, combined with new channels for the arrival of immigrant workers in the future, would increase the productivity of immigrant workers and create more job openings for American workers in higher-skilled occupations. **The net result would be economic gains of roughly \$180 billion over ten years.**

- An enforcement-only approach would shrink the overall economy, reducing opportunities for higher-skilled American workers. **The net result would be economic losses of roughly \$80 billion over ten years.**

"As Congress begins drafting comprehensive immigration reform proposals, the latest CATO report makes the essential point that reforming our broken immigration system by bringing unauthorized workers into our tax system and on the right side of the law will help our economy. Continuing our enforcement-only

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policies not only neglects the broken system, but will actually cost our economy billions of dollars over the next decade," said Mary Giovagnoli, Director of the Immigration Policy Center. "The CATO report recognizes the value immigrants bring to America as workers, taxpayers, and consumers."

KJ

August 14, 2009 | [Permalink](#)

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