



## This week in the life of 2013 immigration reform

*Senate bill faces 300 amendments, Heritage Foundation report finds little support*

By: Tovin Lapan – May 11, 2013

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The Heritage Foundation this week released a report on the projected costs of immigration reform to U.S. taxpayers that, while met with strong rebuttal, managed to dominate much of the discussion on immigration this week.

The foundation on Monday estimated the legislation would produce a "lifetime fiscal deficit" of at least \$6.3 trillion. Immigrants granted legal status from the bill would receive \$9.4 trillion in government benefits and services, the report calculated, while paying only \$3.1 trillion in taxes.

The report was criticized by liberals and conservatives before and after its release (the methodology was similar to a 2007 report on immigration reform), and the Heritage Foundation found itself on the defensive all week (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

The report was bashed by the likes of Republican Party chairman Haley Barbour and former Heritage Foundation economist Tim Kane. A good roundup of the conservative criticism can be found [here](#), but the gist is: Heritage assumes little gain from the legalization of immigrants who are residing in the country illegally, including little to no upward mobility among immigrants or their children in terms of employment or education.

These assumptions do not mesh with a recent Pew Hispanic Center report indicating the Hispanic high school dropout rate is at an all-time low, and Hispanic college enrollment rate is at an all-time high, with both rates having shown gradual, steady improvement. An estimated 80 percent of all immigrants living in the country without legal status are Hispanic.

The report was released just days before the bill was before the Senate Judiciary Committee for markup, when amendments to the bill are voted up or down. There are 300 amendments offered. Senate Republicans filled the agenda with 194 amendments, and the Democrats came in with 106. Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa led the charge with 77 amendments.

On Thursday, the committee addressed 36 amendments, approving 19. A proposal by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, to triple the number of Border Patrol agents and add other security measures was shot down, while amendments approved included provisions for reimbursing local law enforcement for immigration holds, increasing the number of federal judges in Southwestern border court districts and a grant program for improvements at ports of entry.

The libertarian Cato Institute, which criticized the Heritage report, published an economic study of immigration reform in late 2012 that painted a much more positive picture of the economic gains of reform.

"Comprehensive immigration reform generates an annual increase in U.S. GDP of at least 0.84 percent. This amounts to \$1.5 trillion in additional GDP over 10 years. It also boosts wages for both native-born and newly legalized immigrant workers. The effects would generate a \$5.3 billion increase in California, a \$1.9 billion increase in Los Angeles County, and a \$1.68 billion increase in Arizona," wrote Raul Hinojosa-Ojeda, the study's author.

While the Heritage Foundation found mostly negatives in the 800-page Senate Bill 744, pro-reform America's Voice issued a rundown of its "highlights" and "lowlights" of the proposal.