



Immigration reform: Good for America and our economy

By: Javier Ortiz – June 20, 2013

For decades our country has largely ignored the 11 million illegal or undocumented immigrants living within the United States. It is time for us to open our eyes and confront the problem staring us in the face. By not addressing the issue, we place an unnecessary burden on American households and hinder our economy from growing to its full potential. Members of Congress must now come together and allow immigration reform to go through an open and transparent process in order to create a bill that works best for all Americans.

Our economy is in a rut. The Department of Labor recently announced that the U.S. economy only added a lackluster 175,000 jobs in May and the unemployment rate ticked up to 7.6 from 7.5 percent. Obama's failed economy has hurt American families leaving them to bear the cost of his misguided policies. But immigration reform can be accomplished in a fashion that is pro-economy and good for job creation.

The CATO Institute concluded in a study on the economic benefits of comprehensive immigration reform that U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) would increase by at least .84 percent each year after the reform is implemented. The study also estimated net personal income would increase \$30 to \$36 billion in the first three years following earned legalization as a result of the higher earning power of newly-legalized workers. Furthermore, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, former director of the Congressional Budget Office and now president of the American Action Forum, conducted a study which found the federal deficit would be reduced by a cumulative amount of \$2.7 trillion over the first 10 years of the immigration reform.

In addition, a group of eminent economists recently surveyed found 85 percent of them agreed that undocumented immigrants have impacted the U.S. economy in a positive (74 percent) or neutral (11 percent) manner. Moreover, a report by the Immigration Policy Center estimated that each immigrant pays in taxes an average between \$20,000 and \$80,000 more than they consume in public benefits.

But immigration reform is a political not economic issue. All of the studies referenced above point to the fact that passing comprehensive immigration reform increases the nation's GDP and net personal income. The U.S. Senate is moving closer to taking action after passing procedural votes to open debate on The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013. But Congress must be committed to seeing this bill through in a bi-partisan manner rather than allowing it to die under political pressure. In the words of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, "The 'Gang of Eight' has done their work, and now it's time for the gang of 100 to do its

work.”

Americans went to the polls in November to elect members of Congress to govern and create policies that would positively impact their lives. It is with this charge that Congress must tackle the crucial issue of immigration reform and allow for as much debate and amendments as necessary to reach a solution to this problem. Now is not the time to sit back or wither under political pressure when reform is vitally needed. Thirty years have passed since President Ronald Reagan addressed immigration in 1986 and the time for action is now.

Congress has the responsibility to come to grips with the issues facing our nation and they can begin by passing comprehensive immigration reform. In order for this to occur, the U.S. Senate must first take the time to debate and improve the ‘Gang of Eight’ bill which offers a strong baseline to start from. Our economy is continuing to struggle under the policies of the Obama Administration, but Congress has the ability to make a positive difference by passing immigration reform which would give our economy a badly needed shot in the arm to create jobs and turn things around.

Ortiz is a Republican strategist, principal at Crane and Crane Consulting, and an advisor on public policy and regulations for a D.C.-based law firm.