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[The Truth About Immigration, the Border and Jobs](#)

By: [David Dayen](#) Sunday May 16, 2010 5:06 pm



Former half-term Governor Sarah Palin [defended Arizona's immigration law today](#). That sentence is about as much attention to her views as is deserved. (**UPDATE:** Except for [TBogg's whack at it](#).)

I would rather point to a series of new studies showing that the law was birthed in and supported by ignorance of the reality at the border and the facts behind immigration. First, on the border, where crime has [not increased in any way](#), despite claims to the contrary. It's not for nothing that the sheriff in that ridiculous John McCain "Complete the Danged Fence" commercial was from an interior Arizona county; the sheriffs at the border aren't seeing a problem:

Reporting from Nogales, Ariz. — On the other side of the metal barrier that separates this town from its namesake in Mexico, there have already been more than 120 homicides this year, including the assassination of the assistant police chief.

In this sleepy town of 21,000, there hasn't been a killing in three years.

"If you look at it statistically, if you look at the community as a whole, it's very, very safe," said Police Chief Jeffrey Kirkham.

Despite the drug war that has claimed thousands of lives in Mexico, communities along the U.S. side of the 2,000-mile southern border have shown [virtually no increase in crime](#) for several years.

There are dozens of towns, counties and cities along the border and no single measure of crime along the whole frontier. But a review of crime statistics for the largest communities and interviews with law enforcement officials from Texas to California show that, despite a widespread perception that the violence in Mexico has spread north, U.S. border communities are fairly secure. Some have even become safer.

You can do a lot of work with one isolated incident or some gruesome pictures from Mexico. But the facts are plain to see – border communities in the US are reasonably safe places to live. There are acts of violence taking place due to drug operations throughout the country, if not at the border, but we know how the response to that over the past forty years that has fared – it's been [an abject failure](#).

Furthermore, it has little to do with the bulk of immigration into the country, both legally and illegally – people wanting a better life for them and their families who are willing to work for it. And contrary to the popular opinion of blowhards on the subject, increased immigration [creates more jobs](#) and even increases wages in almost every sector.

But most economists and other experts say there's little to support the claim. Study after study has shown that immigrants grow the economy, expanding demand for goods and services that the foreign-born workers and their families consume, and thereby creating jobs. There is even broad agreement among economists that while immigrants may push down wages for some, the overall effect is to increase average wages for American-born workers [...]

Immigrant workers “create almost as many” jobs as they occupy, “and maybe more,” said Madeleine Sumption, policy analyst at the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute, which is funded by a range of foundations, corporations and international organizations. “They often create the jobs they work in.” In addition, “they buy things, and they make the economy bigger,” she told us. As she and a co-author [wrote in a report](#) last year for a group created by the British government:

Somerville and Sumption: [T]he impact of immigration [on a nation's economy] remains small, for several reasons. Immigrants are not competitive in many types of jobs, and hence are not direct substitutes for natives. Local employers increase demand for low-skilled labor in areas that receive low-skilled immigrant inflows. Immigrants contribute to demand for goods and services that they consume, in turn increasing the demand for labor. And immigrants contribute to labor market efficiency and long-term economic growth.

Analysts from the libertarian Cato Institute and the liberal Economic Policy Institute agree on this point: immigrants who work in this country grow the economy, purchase goods and services in America which adds to overall demand, and creates openings for higher-wage earners in a variety of sectors. If anyone is harmed financially by an influx of immigrants, it's the other immigrants with whom they compete in low-wage sector jobs.

We have a large and diverse country and that's among our strengths. As long as overpopulation isn't a factor, which it isn't, we can absorb people willing to work in our society and grow our stateside economy. In fact, it would be better for all involved if this activity was in the real rather than the shadow economy, so the workers would contribute through taxes to the commons.

In a general sense I would sanction employers hiring undocumented immigrants because they're almost certainly exploiting them. The rest of this is simple demagoguery, people taking out frustrations on the underclass about wage stagnation and joblessness which should be directed at the futility and mistakes of the overclass.

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5 Responses to “The Truth About Immigration, the Border and Jobs”

afterthought May 16th, 2010 at 5:50 pm

[1](#)

Since Obama took a pass on immigration reform, the right wing stepped in.

Is there a *progressive* answer to US-Mexican relations?

Yes.

1. Support free and fair elections in Mexico, quit propping up right wing juntas.
2. Left wing Mexican governments will ameliorate conditions for the poor, and war against the Catholic Church's unlimited human population policy.
3. Up north, the government would seize the businesses of any employer who knowing or unknowingly hired an illegal immigrant.

4. The government would interdict illegal crossings of the border and otherwise enforce the laws
5. Once the flow of new illegal immigrants was stopped, those people here illegally would be given amnesty.

But if there is no leadership, the right will step in with *your papers please* laws and worse.

Before life in the left leaning echo-chamber makes you conclude otherwise, just know that illegal immigration is **very** unpopular in the electorate and the Arizona law is very popular, *especially when compared to inaction by the Obama administration*. Had Obama et al actually proposed a reasonable solution to the flood of illegal immigrants into America, the electorate would have listened.

It might be too late.

 [Reply](#)

republicanblack May 16th, 2010 at 6:08 pm

2

This immigration law is re-DICK-U-Lust!! I mean it, it's like the republicans have a hardon for Mexicans, not immigration reform in and of itself, but for Mexicans. They are only targeting those who look like they could be from Mexico. How do I know, well for starters they are not going after employers. I mean why do you think most people come to America, well its not to stand on corners and be harrassed by police. It's the jobs, though bigots say its welfare. Anyhow, why not allow police to ask papers of employers, like they can "people suspected of being here illegally" if they wanted to stem the problem they would go after the cake, anyways this is why we need to pay attention to court nominations, check out the story on Kagan:

<http://wendygdphillips.wordpress.com/2010/05/10/this-is-no-sonia/>

 [Reply](#)

carolinamtnwoman May 16th, 2010 at 9:54 pm

3

Only the truth, absent of hyperbole, surrounding this most important issue should be revealed, discussed, and considered.

Suggested Reading:

US Immigration Policy Likely to Boost Population

By Joseph Chamie
YaleGlobal.yale.edu
July 30, 2009

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/us-immigration-policy-likely-boost-population>

The Economic Impacts of Mass Immigration into the United States
And the Proper Progressive Response

By Philip Cafaro
Colorado State University

Policy Brief #09-2

December, 2009

<http://www.progressivesforimmigrationreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/cafaro.pdf><http://www.npg.org/comments042310usimmig.html> [Reply](#)

carolinamtnwoman May 16th, 2010 at 10:29 pm

[4](#)In response to [republicanblack @ 2](#)

I beg to differ. Many, if not most, individuals opposed to immigration reform are not racists, but have been maliciously portrayed as such by mainstream media propaganda, owned and operated by corporate elitists with an agenda to secure a massive underclass of cheap labor in order to compete globally, and to provide a vast military recruitment pool for current and future wars to advance the American empire. These individuals do not oppose immigration – just mass immigration, and it matters not whether the immigrants are Mexican, South American, Canadian, British, German, Chinese, etc., etc.

 [Reply](#)

Kassandra May 17th, 2010 at 7:09 am

[5](#)

Well, it's real different if one depends on the few remaining social resources left after Bush.

Where I live, they don't come up here to work, they come to get the social services and section 8 housing. the Mexican American citizens don't like it either.

This year there were no immigrants to pick the crops. Why? Well, why work when you can sit and watch your wide screen TEEVEE? So, Americans went down and picked it for lack of jobs.

It really needs to be addressed because the employers DO scam the illegals.

But, I suspect, if my state is any indication, the Dem governor made this into a sanctuary state without a ballot initiative, of course. and the cops were given a directive not to hassle them...no matter what they did...short of murder and that wasn't reported on much either.

It's different when you watch it happening under your nose; literally, than if you have some \$\$\$ and can insulate yourself from it and opine.

It's not just nice Mexican families who are coming over the border.

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BP OIL DISASTER



DAVID DAYEN ON TWITTER



David Dayen
ddayen

@markos data on that stat "Undocumented immigrants provide Arizona with estimated \$27B annually in economic stimulus"

<http://bit.ly/9OVwAN>

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Committee to Save the World From Itself"

<http://bit.ly/aFy6QC>

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