

The GOP's ideology doesn't match economic reality. Just ask one of this year's Nobel Prize winners.

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Republicans have been openly attempting to prevent the decline of white power in the face of massive demographic changes. To put it bluntly, a great many of them do not like immigration much — legal or otherwise. Naturally, they then insist that bringing in more immigrants makes native-born workers worse off. But that's not necessarily true.

Likewise, Republicans have traditionally opposed hikes in the minimum wage, insisting that would raise unemployment. But that may not be how it plays out in the real world either.

Exposing these economic myths was essentially the contribution of one of this year's three winners of the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel (colloquially, the Nobel Prize in economics). David Card of the University of California, Berkeley, actually looked at data. (All three Nobel winners worked in the field of "natural experiments," looking at real-world examples to inform their findings.) It turns out the ideological agenda of the GOP does not hold up all that well to scrutiny.

Card's work suggests that immigration may not be bad for workers already here. One of his studies on the 1980 Mariel boatlift "showed that a sudden influx of 125,000 Cubans had no negative effects on wages or employment for low-skilled Miami residents, even as it increased the city's labor force by 7 percent," the Financial Times explained. While immigration restrictionists still cling to the idea it is a zero-sum labor market in which every job "taken" is "lost" by someone else, it's clear the research is mixed at best.

As the Cato Institute's Alex Nowrasteh explains, the current debate among academics has boiled down to the tiny impact immigration has on a small sliver (9 percent) of the workforce that has no high school diploma. For other American workers, immigration studies have found that immigrants boosted those workers' wages for a net gain in wage growth. Anti-immigrant right-wingers will insist this is not true. They remain firmly attached to an economic argument, however flawed, that supports their cultural and racial aversion to immigrants.

On the minimum wage, Card looked at the difference between New Jersey workers, whose state's minimum wage increased, and Pennsylvania workers just across the border, where the minimum wage was not raised. It turned out, as MarketWatch explained, that "raising the

minimum wage didn't necessarily cause businesses to lay off workers and hurt employment. Before (Card's) famous study, economists almost universally believed increasing the minimum wage cost jobs."

Card told an interviewer that "if you raise the minimum wage a little — not a huge amount, but a little — you won't necessarily cause a big employment reduction. In some cases you could get an employment increase." Since then, reputable economists have reached different conclusions on the impact of minimum wage hikes. It is now a legitimate subject of debate rather than an ironclad rule that any increase in minimum wages winds up hurting the people it is intended to help.

We see other instances in which right-wing ideology leads to faulty economic conclusions. For months, Republicans and many in the media who parroted their arguments insisted generous unemployment benefits were keeping people from working. (This assumes people are lazy and more inclined to get something for nothing.) Sure enough, this turned out to be dead wrong.

States that ended higher unemployment benefits showed little discernible bump in employment as compared with states that maintained the benefit. In early September, about 7.5 million Americans lost the entire federal subsidy, while 3 million had their unemployment checks cut \$300 each week. Nevertheless, fewer than 200,000 jobs were added in September — less than what was projected for the month. Maybe generous safety net spending does not undermine work, but ending such benefits prematurely does inflict needless suffering on the most vulnerable.

The Nobel Prize recipient and other evidence-based economists teach us an important lesson: Be wary of economic arguments that perfectly (and emphatically!) align with those who pay no heed to inequality, express hostility to government and think trickle-down economics is the way to increase prosperity. Real life is more complicated. Depriving those in need of modest help (e.g., a slightly higher wage, subsidized child care) and barring able-bodied immigrants from entering the country lack solid economic justification. Such an approach not only hurts working-class Americans, but deprives the entire country of the benefits of more productive and better-educated workers.