

# Myths & Facts

TOP 5 MYTHS ABOUT IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES



**Just and Fair  
Immigration Reform**

1

**Myth: U.S. borders are not secure.**

**Fact: Our borders are extremely secure.**

- From 2000 to 2011 the federal budget for border patrol more than tripled, from \$1.1 billion to \$3.6 billion.
- In 2011, there were 21,444 border agents, nearly double the number in 2006.
- The number of people found trying to enter the country illegally has decreased more than 80 percent since 2000.

It appears that nothing will satisfy those who continue to claim that border security must be increased before enacting reform. As U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano told members of a U.S. Senate hearing on immigration in February, 2013, “Too often the border security refrain simply serves as an excuse. Our borders have in fact never been stronger.”

2

**Myth: Immigrants unfairly compete with Americans for jobs.**

**Fact: Immigrants generally do not compete with Americans for jobs; in fact, they create jobs.**

- If the millions of undocumented immigrants in the United States were to disappear, the U.S. economy would contract and the total number of U.S. jobs would decrease.
- Immigrants create thousands of jobs as consumers of food, clothing, appliances, and other products and services.
- Immigrants create jobs by establishing new businesses.
- Immigrants are needed to replenish the labor force and provide a tax base as 77 million American baby boomers retire.

3

**Myth: Undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes.**

**Fact: Undocumented immigrants pay billions of dollars in taxes every year.**

Undocumented immigrants pay sales taxes and property taxes—even if they rent. And most also pay state and federal income taxes, as well as Social Security and Medicare taxes. The Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy estimates that state and local taxes paid in 2010 by households that are headed by undocumented immigrants equals \$11.2 billion. On average,

immigrants (documented and undocumented) will pay \$80,000 more in taxes per capita than they consume in government benefits over a lifetime. As an example, in 2010 undocumented immigrants paid \$8.7 billion into Social Security and \$2 billion to Medicare, money that they may never benefit from because, as undocumented workers, they are not eligible for these programs.

4

**Myth: If we provide a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants currently in the United States, this is an incentive for more people to come illegally.**

**Fact: The process of coming to the United States is not an easy one, and the revised standards for future immigration should make legal immigration much more attractive.**

Those who cross the border illegally face physical hardship, and many are injured or die in the process. Those who overstay their visas must live with the knowledge that they are susceptible to arrest and deportation at any time. By reforming the immigration system to provide a reasonable process for those who seek opportunity and freedom in America, future immigrants will take this legal route rather than coming here illegally.

5

**Myth: If you get in line and wait your turn you can immigrate legally.**

**Fact: The current immigration system is badly broken.**

Under the current immigration system there are severely limited avenues to legally reside in the United States. The vast majority of people seeking to come to the United States to gain economic opportunity or escape persecution must vie for one of just 50,000 diversity visas offered each year to residents of qualified countries. In 2009, there were 9.1 million people competing for those 50,000 spots. The current system does not serve businesses or the economy. There are hundreds of thousands of employer-sponsored green cards waiting to be processed, preventing businesses from meeting their employment needs.