



JUST THE FACTS:

Undocumented Immigrants in America



Putting to rest common misconceptions regarding undocumented immigrants

For years, the inherent dignity of undocumented immigrants has been under attack. These attacks are supported by incorrect, misleading statements aiming to dehumanize and belittle an entire group of people.

Our country depends on the contributions of undocumented immigrants. Without comprehensive immigration reform, our economy continues to suffer and families continue to be torn apart in the absence of a pathway to citizenship for those who want to contribute to our society.

NETWORK would like to address some of these misconceptions in order to foster a more accurate understanding of undocumented immigrants in America. We would also like to highlight the many contributions and sacrifices working immigrant families have made.

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Our Catholic faith grounds us in the realization that each person has inherent dignity because he or she is created in the image and likeness of God.

“You must not oppress the stranger; you know how a stranger feels, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt.” *Exodus 23: 9*

Common misconceptions about undocumented people

Undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes.

In 2010, undocumented immigrants paid \$8.4 billion in sales taxes, \$1.6 billion in property taxes, and \$1.2 billion in personal income taxes.¹

In addition, undocumented immigrants are contributing to the Social Security system and they will never be able to receive any benefits unless there is a path to legalization. One estimate showed that undocumented immigrants contribute \$9 billion a year to Social Security.²

Undocumented immigrants hurt our economy.

Dr. William F. Ford, a professor at Middle Tennessee State University and expert on taxes and immigration, calculates that undocumented immigrants contributed \$428 billion dollars to the nation's \$13.6 trillion gross domestic product in 2006.³

Undocumented immigrants utilize public and common resources but do not contribute to the establishment and maintenance of those programs and infrastructures.

The descendants of undocumented immigrants generate approximately \$80,000 more each in taxes than they receive in state, federal and local benefits over their lifetimes, according to the National Immigration Forum.²

Undocumented immigrants will not learn English or integrate into our culture.

First-generation, non-English speaking immigrants predictably have lower rates of English proficiency than native speakers. However, 91% of second generation immigrants are fluent or near-fluent English speakers. By the third generation, 97% speak English fluently or near fluently.⁴

They are taking away jobs from Americans.

Immigrants assume jobs and positions that support the present level of the U.S. economy and society, allowing us to purchase goods at lower prices. The U.S. agricultural industry is dependent upon undocumented immigrants to harvest the fields. If crops cannot be harvested, fruits and vegetables will be imported at a much higher expense.

Furthermore, economists from the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco found that immigration has no significant effect on the number of jobs available to U.S.-born workers and helps boost incomes and productivity over time.⁵

Undocumented immigrants are more likely to commit crimes.

Despite increased numbers of undocumented immigrants over the past decade in Arizona, the crime rate has fallen. Various independent researchers and government commissions have found immigrants less likely to commit crimes or be behind bars than the native-born.⁶

The current immigration system hurts our economy, families



“Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.” *John F. Kennedy*

Immigration Facts

E-Verify, as a stand-alone mandate, is just bad law.

E-Verify is an online system that was designed to enable an employer, using information reported on the job applicant’s Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, to determine the eligibility of that person to work in the United States. Despite its known error rate and unnecessary harm to citizens and authorized workers, Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and other legislators continue to advocate for its nationwide implementation.

In states where the program has been voluntarily implemented, there is a 0.5 -2% error rate due to data-entry errors and common foreign names. If this program were to be mandated by legislation across the nation, approximately 1.2 million citizens and qualified workers could be rejected or placed in “tentative non-confirmation” (TNC) status. To make matters worse, there is no uniform system or process in place to easily correct an erroneously reported status. Instead, the job applicant must try to deal directly with the bureaucracy of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or the Social Security Administration to correct their records. Even if a correction is proven to be warranted, six months can pass before complete resolution of the inaccurately reported information is established. By that time, the job is filled and the employer has lost interest in this “problem” applicant. In the current economic climate, struggling workers cannot endure unnecessary delays in the procurement of gainful employment due to bigotry and an error-prone system.

This system, if mandated, will serve to drive the unauthorized worker into the underground of the workforce where he/she could not pay taxes and would endure exploitation due to fear of discovery.

And finally, the program fails to meet its stated objective of identifying undocumented workers. On the contrary, the DHS reports that undocumented workers actually elude identification in this system 54% of the time. In short, authorized workers suffer delayed employment or unemployment due to false positives while unauthorized workers continue to work.

Harsh state-level immigration laws are detrimental to our values and economy.

Across Alabama, farmers and other businesses are facing severe labor shortages because of the state’s harsh new immigration law.

More than 100 farmers and three Alabama representatives recently held a public hearing in Oneonta, about 35 miles northeast of Birmingham. During the hearing, farmers spoke about severe hardships when their laborers left the state after the law was passed.

The University of Alabama also reported that the state will lose \$40 million as a result of the law.⁸

Replacing immigrants is often unsuccessful.

A large number of immigrant workers left after Alabama’s harsh immigration laws took effect. Farmers and others tried to hire American replacements. However, even when they found replacements, there were problems.

According to some farmers, many Americans worked slower than seasoned farm hands and some were ready to call it a day after lunch or by midafternoon. Some quit after a single day.⁹

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25 E St. NW Suite 200 • Washington DC 20001 • 202.347.9797 • fax 202.347.9864 • www.networklobby.org

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