Global Migration and US Immigration Reform: Where do we Stand?

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Highlights

• Global migration: 200 million migrants, 3.1% of 6.9 billion people; inequalities and networks mean more

• US = 40 million foreign-born residents, 20% of global total of 214 million; 11 mil, almost 30%, are unauthorized

• 100,000 entries per day via front-, side-, and back-doors; immigration = enter via side or back door, adjust status to immigrant; status quo = 2nd best
Global Migration

- Demographic inequality: 30 rich countries shrinking; 170 poorer adding 82 million a year to global pop
- Economic inequality: 30 rich have 1/7 of world pop but 5/7 of world GDP—average $40,000/yr vs $2,800—14 to 1
- Communications, transportation, and rights revolutions facilitate migration and stay abroad
- Policy--manage migration via rights
Front Door to the US

• Front-door legal immigrants; 1.1 million in FY08; almost 60% already in US
  – Immediate relatives of US citizens = 490,000; other family unification = 230,000; 2/3 of all immigrants = family unification
  – Employment based = 165,000, 90% = in US
  – Refugees, 90,000; Diversity, 42,000

• Employment immigration—95% = adjustment of status in US

• Issue: who are gatekeepers for side- and back-door migrants?
Side-Door Nonimmigrants

- About 40 million nonimmigrant admissions in FY08 (excludes Canada and Mexico)
- Nonimmigrant: admitted for a specific time & purpose; 80% tourists, 15% business visitors
- Plus 1.1 million temporary worker admissions (counts entries, not individuals), from H-1B to L (intra-company), O (outstanding), P (athletes), TN (NAFTA)
- 900,000 foreign students (and their families)
- 500,000 exchange visitors (J1)
- About 2 million nonimmigrant foreigners can work at least part time in US
**Back-Door Unauthorized**

- Enter without inspection (EWI) or enter legally and violate visa (tourist who works)
- 800,000 apprehensions in FY08, down from 1 million in FY07 and peak 1.8 million in both FY86 and FY00 (IRCA and economic boom)
- Estimated 12 million unauthorized, including 55% EWIs and 45% visa violators
- Unauthorized and legal immigrants
  - Mexico—source of 60 percent of unauthorized (7 mil) and 30 percent of US foreign born (12 mil)
  - 10% of 120 million persons born in Mexico have moved to the US
US Polls

• 13% of US residents born abroad, with their children 25%=35% of US residents have immigrant backgrounds

• Polls--Nation of Immigrants believes immigration is good, but wants to (1) reduce legal immigration and (2) have government to do more to reduce illegal migration
Immigration is Good

On the whole, do you think immigration is a good thing or a bad thing for this country today?

- % Good thing
- % Bad thing

GALLUP POLL
But Reduce Immigration

In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

Gallup trend since 2000

- % Increased
- % Present level
- % Decreased

GALLUP POLL
Especially Unauthorized

How important is the issue of illegal immigration to you -- extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?

- Extremely: 35%
- Very: 27%
- Somewhat: 26%
- Not too: 7%
- Not at all: 4%

July 6-8, 2007
Immigration = health care
US Immigration Debate 2010

• US—a magnet for the world’s migrants
  – 50,000 diversity visas draw 12 million+ apps
  – Continued illegal migration despite fences, agents

• Elite-popular divide on immigration & trade:
  – Elite: attract best and brightest to keep US competitive in globalizing world VERSUS
  – Popular: government should protect Americans from foreign workers and goods

• Extremes: No borders VS No immigrants
  – WSJ (there shall be open borders) VERSUS
  – FAIR-US needs an immigration time out
  – Most migrants and employers--status quo is OK
Lessons

• A Nation of Immigrants has majorities who want to: (1) reduce legal immigration; and (2) have government do more to reduce illegal migration

• 13% of US residents born abroad + their children mean 25-35% of US residents have immigrant backgrounds. But, less than 20% say “increase immigration”

• 50%+ say “reduce immigration”