

II. Demographics

The immigration system, as it exists today, does not adequately address the needs of the labor market. On the upper end of skilled workers there are many requests for special visas for engineers, computer specialists, technicians, doctors, scientists and others. Our colleges and universities are not producing people with these skills to the extent they are needed. Also, increasingly, many students who come from other countries to become educated, are returning to their country of origin rather than remaining here to work. Many requests from Hi-tech firms for special visas are not being filled.

At the lower end, unskilled workers, not only Ag workers are needed, but workers in the service industry, restaurants, hospitals, factories, construction, meat packing and many others. The native-born population is becoming more educated with every generation, and is unwilling to take these jobs—at almost any salary. The major shift began after WWII with the GI Bill. This created a new middle-class in America, which wanted more education for their children. Market forces have attracted 1.5–1.8 million skilled and unskilled immigrants yearly. Annual legal quotas admit only about 1 million each year. At the same time, just in Mexico, 700,000 jobs are created yearly and 1 million workers enter the market. Our native-born workers are projected to grow by 10 percent, while there will be an increase in new jobs much greater than that, 15 % in the restaurant business alone. We need immigration because if it were stopped it would be disastrous for the US economy.

The populations of immigrants, legal and undocumented, certainly make an impact on the gateway cities and states where they are located in large numbers. The most frequently mentioned are the schools and Health Delivery System. This creates anger among the native population, but the immigrants do pay a lot of sales tax, which stays in the area. The payroll taxes go to the Federal Government, while the States must pay for the Health and welfare and school costs for the immigrants. This is another disconnect.

The subject of remittances, or money sent to families in the countries of origin, is another issue. An article published Oct. 19, 2007 in the San Diego Union-Tribune states that the amount of money that workers in San Diego County send to Mexico has ballooned—reaching \$1.1 billion last year from \$800 million in 2004. Migrants worldwide sent more than \$300 billion to their home countries last year. That sum surpassed foreign development aid and foreign direct investment and carries major development potential for poor nations if properly channeled. India took in more remittance money last year than any other nation, \$24.5 billion, with Mexico a close second.

Some feel that this money is flowing out of the region. However, a report last year by the Inter-American Development Bank reached a different conclusion, saying that for every dollar leaving the local economy through remittances, \$9 remains behind to benefit the local economy. Some remittances are sent by clubs that Mexican natives of a particular area formed in the US. The Mexican government sometimes matches these funds 3/1, making possible building new schools, water systems, sports facilities, etc.

Mexico's minister of social development, Beatriz Zavala Peniche, who said remittances have

been a contributing factor in Mexico's efforts to reduce poverty, lauded the clubs that sent money back. The number of Mexicans living in poverty has dropped from 52 million to 44 million since 2000, Zavala said.

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