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The Benefits of Immigration to the U.S. Economy

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Immigration is at the forefront of policy issues in this election cycle. Donald Trump is promising to build a wall along the US/Mexico border, create a deportation force to remove the “bad hombres”, and provide no path to citizenship to undocumented people living in the United States unless they self-deport. Hillary Clinton is promising to introduce a comprehensive immigration reform plan with a path to citizenship within her first 100 days in office. The Trump campaign continues to repeat stories of a few individuals, who were immigrants, that committed criminal acts in order to energize anti-immigrant sentiment and gather support. The acts of a few immigrants do not define the many. In the face of this prevalent anti-immigrant rhetoric, it is important to recognize the significant contributions that immigrants make to the United States.

Historically, immigrants have enriched the United States by sharing their ideas, traditions, and culture. Immigrants have always been and continue to be an integral part of the U.S. economy. Arriving immigrants help strengthen the economy by minimizing the shrinking workforce created by the large number of baby boomers who are retiring from the workforce. Highly skilled technical immigrant workers fuel innovation and entrepreneurship. Undocumented immigrants labor in low and medium skilled, low paying jobs which feed the country.

The anti-immigrant rhetoric claims that immigrants take jobs from native-born citizens. However, a recent report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine found that there is little evidence that immigration significantly affects the overall employment levels of native-born workers. There is some evidence that recent immigrants reduce the employment rate of prior immigrants and reduces the number of hours worked by native teens, but not their employment levels. They also found that, as adults, children of immigrants are among the strongest economic and fiscal contributors in the U.S. Overall immigration has a positive impact on long-run economic growth in the U.S.

Creating a path to legalization for undocumented immigrants can also promote economic growth. When people are allowed to come out of the shadows they are more likely to increase productivity in the American workforce. We have already seen how President Obama’s Deferred Action Against Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has allowed DACA recipients to pursue higher salaries, seek career advancement, and increased their educational opportunities. An increase in wages can also lead to a rise in consumer spending in the economic market. Additionally, if Americans are earning higher wages, the government can collect more taxes, which pay for education, infrastructures, health, and social programs such as social security. For example, according to a report published

in February 2016 by The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, California already pulls in more than \$3 billion in tax revenue from its estimated 3 million undocumented immigrants.

For centuries, the United States has provided shelter to immigrants escaping persecution and terrible country conditions, and in exchange, the United States has benefited from immigrants' culture, ideas, innovation, and labor.

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