



Out of the Shadows

Shining a Light on Immigration and
the Plight of the American Worker

A REPORT BY ERIC RUARK, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH
FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM


FAIR



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a report by Eric A. Ruark, Director of Research

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The U.S. immigration system must be reformed to reflect broad **national** interest, not the narrow special interests that seek cheap labor and increased political influence. This means reducing overall levels of immigration and admitting immigrants who have the education and skills to succeed in 21st Century America.



Introduction

It is one thing to acknowledge that immigrants have made and can continue to make contributions to the U.S. economy. It is quite another to argue that mass immigration has no economic downside. Of course, immigration has helped grow the U.S. economy, however, that growth has almost exclusively benefitted immigrants (both legal and illegal) and those who employ them. The U.S. immigration system functions in such a way that there is no economic benefit for most American citizens. Instead, there is increased unemployment and wage depression for workers, and huge fiscal costs borne by taxpayers.

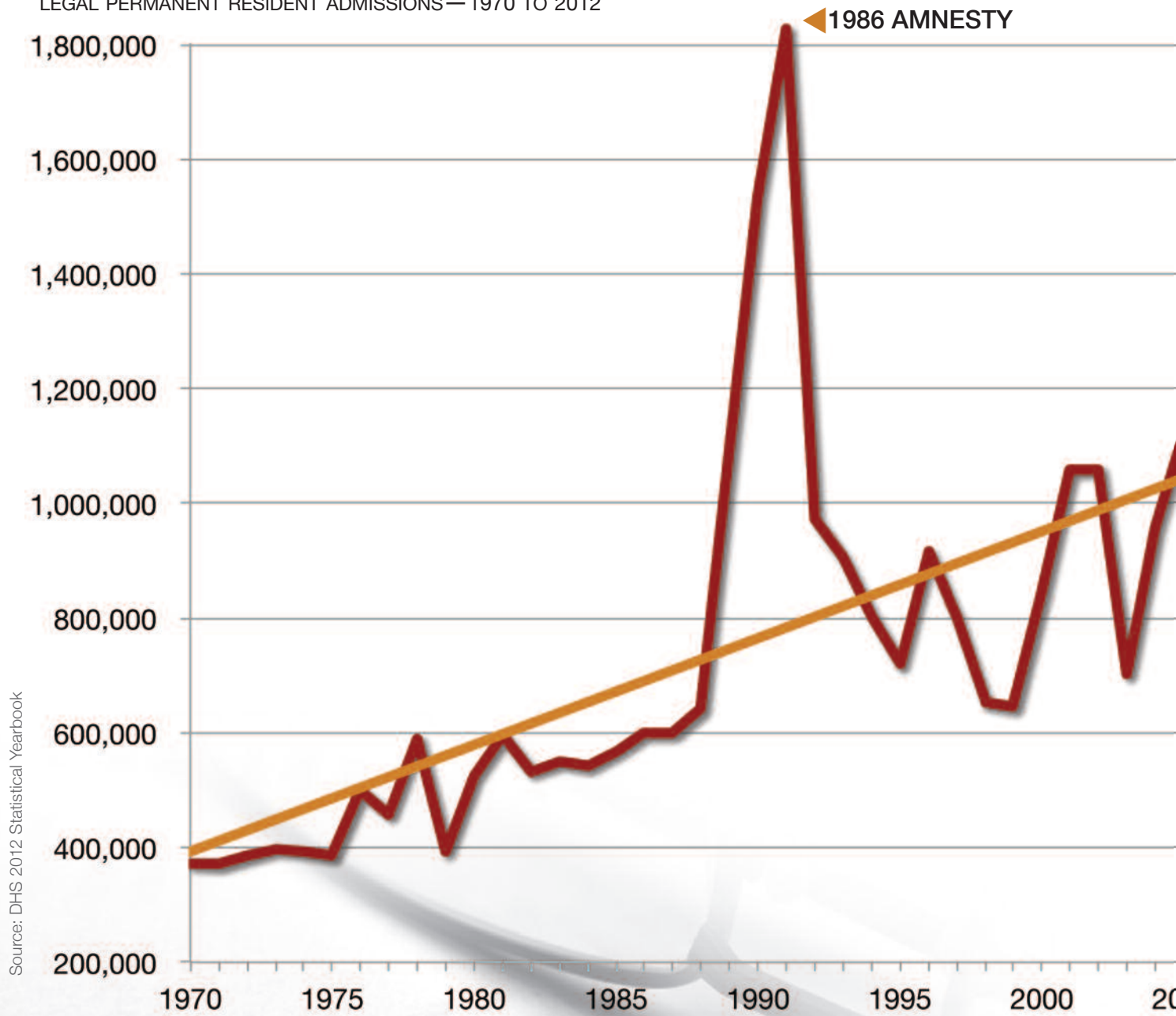
Business lobbyists are constantly calling for an increase in immigration and guest worker programs because increasing the number of job seekers benefits employers by creating an endless pool of cheap labor. It is not that there is a lack of American workers, but rather, that there are few Americans who will work for what some employers *want* to offer. Led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, powerful lobbying groups have been able to stymie any real effort to secure the borders and enforce immigration laws on the interior. Accordingly, the balance of economic power has tilted overwhelmingly in favor of employers. Wages have not kept pace with worker productivity, and have not increased in line with soaring corporate profits.

Americans with lower levels of education and job skills have been hardest hit. Many workers in the construction, landscaping, and service industries have been pushed out of the labor force. The H-1B and L visa programs have also suppressed wages in the tech industry, and caused many Americans with degrees in those fields to seek employment in non-related occupations. Economic indicators show little promise for substantial recovery in the foreseeable future.

“Comprehensive Immigration Reform” as understood by those pushing for it on Capitol Hill means passing legislation that exacerbates this situation, effectively creating barriers for American workers in their own country. Very few politicians are speaking out on behalf of their constituents, and media reports on immigration policy virtually ignores the interests of American workers.

This is the ongoing plight of the American worker; relegated to stand in the shadows when it comes to the debate about immigration reform.

FIGURE 1
LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENT ADMISSIONS—1970 TO 2012



U.S. Department of State

**APPLICATION FOR
IMMIGRANT VISA AND
ALIEN REGISTRATION**

APPLIED

PART I - BIOGRAPHIC DATA

yourself and each



Executive Summary

The political and media elite are attempting to convince the American people that mass immigration will lead to more jobs and higher wages for American workers, as well as balanced budgets, debt reduction, and the bailout of Social Security and Medicare. Yet, they cannot explain how high levels of immigration over the past 40 years have had the exact **opposite** result—high unemployment for Americans displaced by foreign workers, wage depression and stagnation, huge fiscal costs caused by low-skilled immigration—along with the public’s complete distrust of a federal government that has abandoned its constitutional duty to secure the border and enforce existing immigration law.

Unrestrained immigration is not the sole cause of America’s economic and fiscal misfortunes, but it is a major contributing factor. The current U.S. immigration system does not take into account the broad national interest. Instead it favors narrow special interests that have direct political and financial ties to policymakers. The President and members of Congress have abandoned their moral obligation to protect American workers and their custodial responsibility to enact legislation mindful of its effects on future generations.

American workers are denied the opportunity for gainful employment by proponents of amnesty and increased legal admissions, who disguise their position under the pretense of economic or humanitarian efforts. The current call for “comprehensive immigration reform” is a euphemism for legislation that will grant blanket amnesty for more than 10 million illegal aliens while generously rewarding unscrupulous employers who are willing to put short-term profits above the long-term interests of America.

Debate over immigration policy ignores the negative effects that the current system has on American workers, and how the new legislation before Congress—if enacted—would make matters worse. While illegal aliens are applauded by members of Congress and fêted by the President, the American worker remains in the shadows with very few of their elected representatives willing to speak out on the deteriorating economic conditions being faced by tens of millions of American citizens.

Key Findings

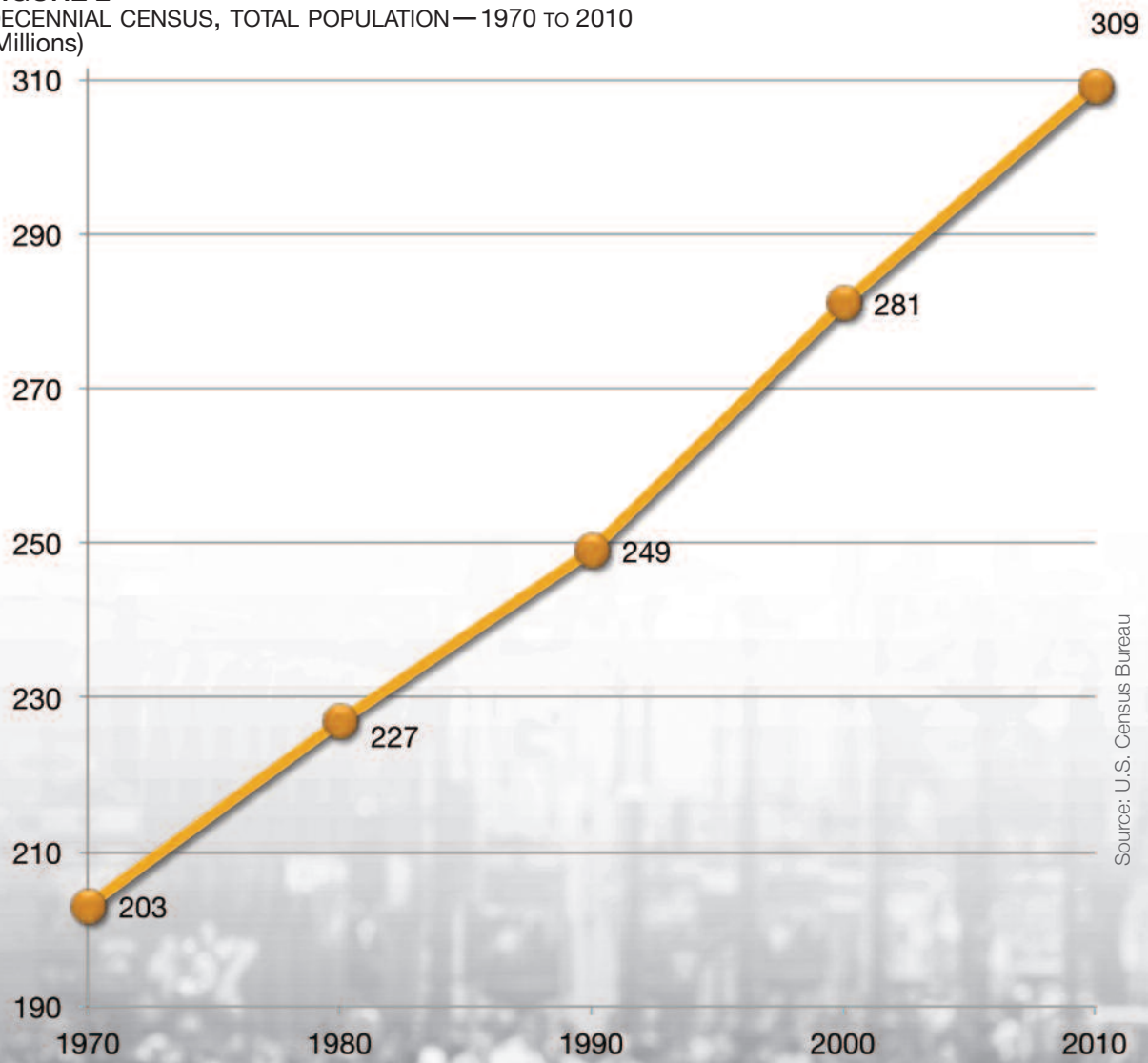
- Despite claims by the Obama administration that the border is secure and record numbers of illegal aliens have been deported, according to Department of Homeland Security estimates, the illegal alien population was higher in 2011 than it was in 2005.
- In May 2007, when Congress was last considering “comprehensive immigration reform,” the unemployment rate was 4.5 percent, with 6.8 million people unemployed and 78.7 million not in the labor force. In May 2013, the unemployment rate was 7.6 percent. There were 11.7 million people unemployed and 90 million not in the labor force.
- In May 2007, the working-age population was 231 million and 153 million persons were employed. In May 2013, six years later, the working-age population had increased by 14 million while the number of employed had decreased by 2 million.
- Following the Great Recession, many of the new jobs created during the “recovery” were not full-time career jobs, and the majority of those who went back to work after being laid off took a lower-paying job.
- Minorities and younger workers are disproportionately affected by competition from illegal aliens. The unemployment rate for teenagers in May 2013 was 24.5 percent. The unemployment rate for Blacks was 13.5 percent, 78 percent higher than the national average.
- Many college graduates are graduating with high levels of student loan debt but with too few good job prospects. A recent survey found that 41 percent of graduates over the last two years are working jobs that do not require a college degree.
- Claims that immigration “grows the economy” ignore the fact that this growth does not benefit the vast majority of the American public. Economic gains from immigration are almost entirely shared by immigrants and the employers of immigrants, while the costs of immigration are passed onto the American taxpayer.
- Wages in occupations that have high concentrations of illegal alien workers have remained stagnant or decreased, despite increased worker productivity and huge gains in corporate profits.

“[T]he U.S. economy over the past decade has worked primarily to the advantage of a small sliver of winners. Meanwhile, the vast majority of workers have not fared well—a trend that stretches back to the late 1970s.”¹

— Lawrence Mishel, Economic Policy Institute



FIGURE 2
DECENNIAL CENSUS, TOTAL POPULATION — 1970 to 2010
(Millions)

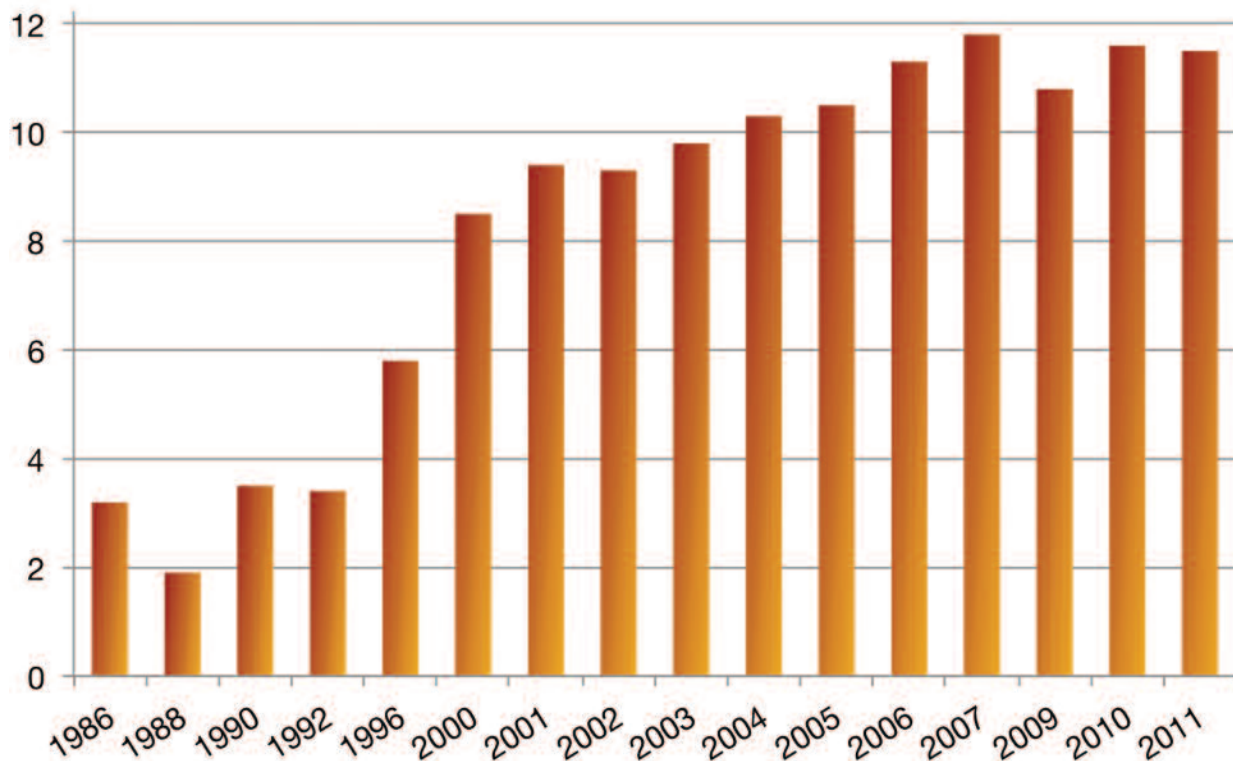


U.S. Immigration Policy Harms American Workers

The modern era of mass immigration began with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which ended national quotas but was not supposed to result in an overall increase in immigrant admissions. However, since 1965, immigration has almost **quadrupled**. Since 1970, the average increase in the U.S. population between Census counts has been 27 million, with most of that increase due to immigration. Between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses, immigration accounted for 80 percent of U.S. population growth.² The admission of legal permanent residents, however, does not tell the whole story.

Illegal immigration, which has decreased in recent years due to the slowdown of the U.S. economy, still remains at around 500,000 people every year.³ Also, there are 22 guest worker visa programs currently admitting foreign workers and, in many cases, their families. A conservative estimate would put the number around 800,000 guest workers admitted every year, however, an accurate accounting is impossible because our government fails to adequately keep track of foreign workers coming into and (supposedly) going out of the United States.

FIGURE 3
ILLEGAL ALIEN POPULATION — 1986 to 2011



Source: Congressional Research Service & Department of Homeland Security

The U.S. working-age population is growing much faster than jobs are being created. This was true before the economy collapsed in 2007 and is part of a long-term trend.⁴ While the economy has experienced periods of intense job growth and relatively low unemployment since 1970, there has been a corresponding increase in the size of the working-age population not in the workforce, and an increase in income inequality.

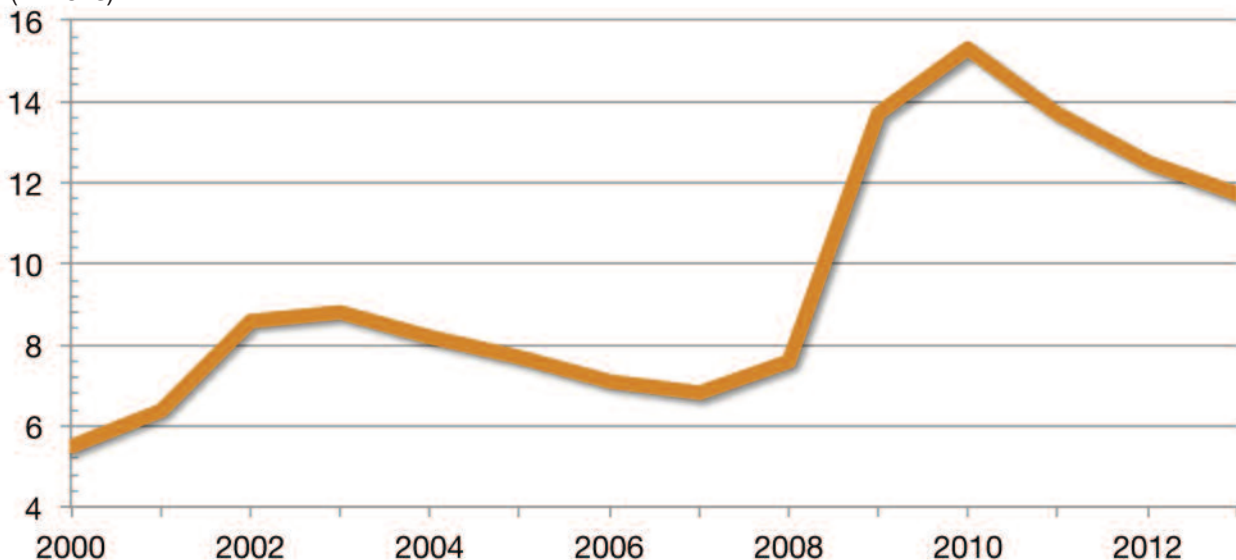
Congress last considered mass amnesty and an exponential increase in legal immigration and guest workers in 2007. The economic indicators at the time were relatively positive. Since then, the United States has been mired in a recession and a subsequent “recovery” in which

TABLE 1
U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT
MAY 2007 TO MAY 2013
(Thousands)

	May 2007	May 2009	May 2011	May 2013
Unemployment Rate	4.5%	9.4%	9.1%	7.6%
Total Population	302,500	308,000	312,500	316,000
Working Age Population	231,480	235,452	239,313	245,363
Labor Force	152,762	155,081	153,693	155,658
Employed	145,943	140,570	139,779	143,898
Full-time Workers	120,997	113,318	112,342	116,238
Part-time Workers	24,880	27,195	27,418	27,699
Participation Rate	66.0%	65.9%	64.2%	63.4%
Unemployed	6,819	14,511	13,914	11,760
Not in Labor Force	78,718	80,371	85,620	89,705

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

FIGURE 4
U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT
APRIL 2000 TO APRIL 2013
(Millions)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

growing numbers of Americans are unable to secure full-time employment. Yet, the arguments today are the same as in 2007—that there are not enough workers to fill employer demand and the only way to “grow the economy” is to permanently add tens of millions more foreign workers.

The so-called Gang of Eight bill introduced in the Senate in April 2013 would add over 50 million people to the United States population through the immigration system over the next decade. This would create a massive oversupply of labor throughout the market and ensure the systematic unemployment of tens of millions of Americans for decades to come, exponentially increasing the number of people living in or near poverty. The federal government will either have to provide massive assistance to adversely affected Americans, thereby increasing deficit spending, or do nothing to alleviate the conditions brought about by its policy of mass immigration.

In a period of higher unemployment and little net job growth, increased employment of immigrants appears to be displacing some native-born workers, including teens, young adults without college degrees, and Black men in the nation's central cities.⁵

—Center for Labor Market Studies



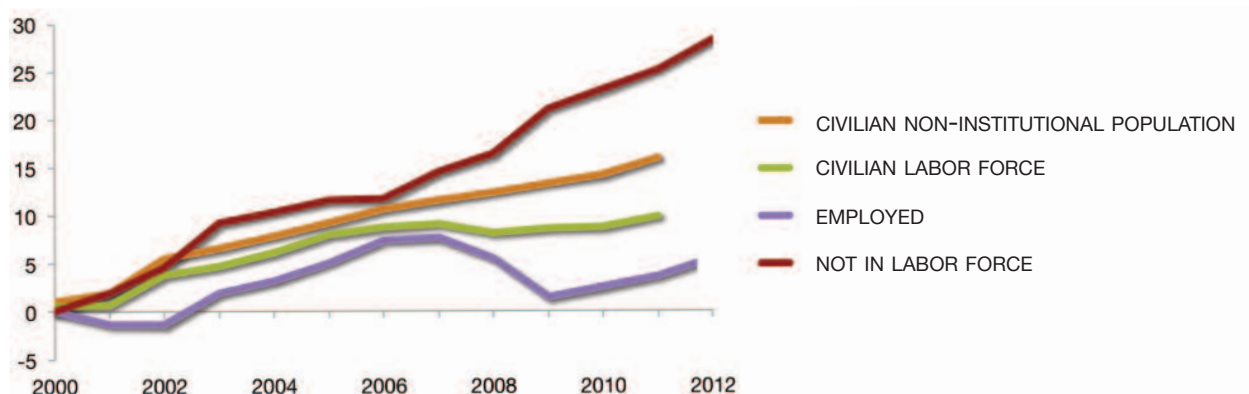
Few Opportunities for a Growing Population

There is a fundamental disconnect between immigration policy and the supply of labor in the United States. Because the U.S. economy is dependent upon growth to give the illusion of prosperity, the pursuit of “job creation” usually trumps sound decisions about policy. Invariably, Congress has capitulated to business lobby demands to allow immigration to increase the supply of labor. The deterioration of the economic standing of the middle class over the last thirty years is in no small part due to the growing number of foreign workers in the workforce.

The situation has become more acute since 2000 with the bursting of the Dot-com bubble followed by the September 11 attacks. Yet, from 2001 to 2011, the United States admitted more immigrants than over any other ten-year period in its history and saw the illegal alien population peak in 2007. When the U.S. economy collapsed in late 2007, the nation’s “broken immigration system” came sharply into focus. And still, immigration continues at the same level as before, with a sizable bi-partisan push to grant amnesty to 12 million illegal aliens, to triple yearly legal admissions, and double the annual admission of nearly two million guest workers.

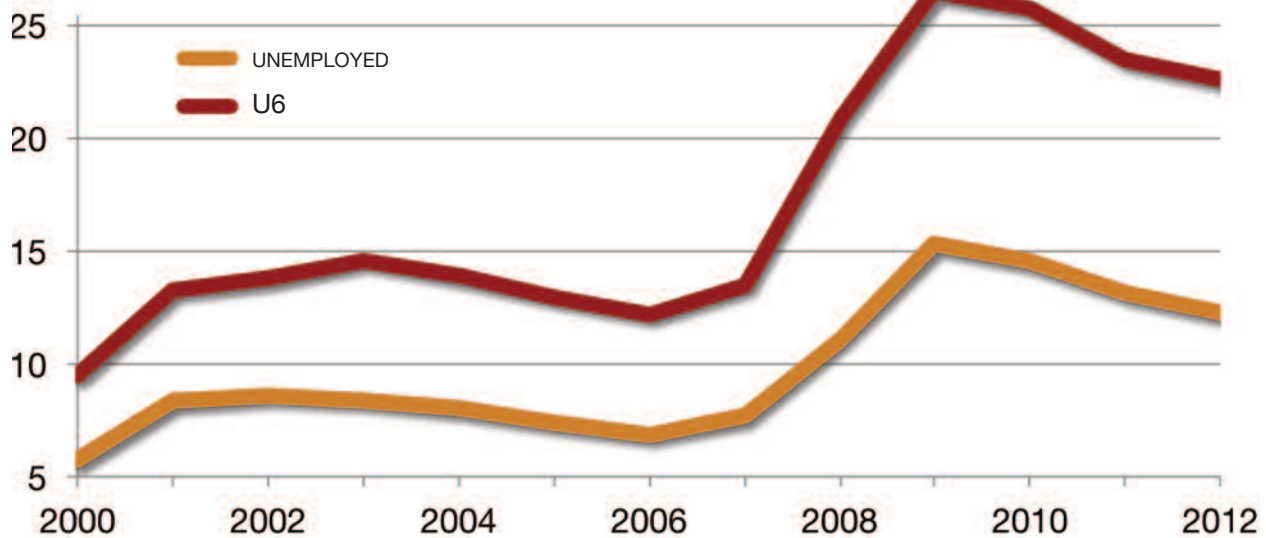
The President and Congress are not very good at directly creating jobs—the so-called stimulus package passed in 2009 is illustrative of that fact—but the federal government can put policies in place that would give American workers access to well-paying, stable jobs. The most immediate fix would be to prevent millions of foreign workers from flooding the labor market. Instead, the leadership of both parties continues to ignore the interests of their constituents and fellow citizens.

FIGURE 5
LABOR FORCE PERCENTAGE CHANGE — 2000 TO 2012



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

FIGURE 6
UNEMPLOYMENT AND U6
(Millions)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: In addition to the official unemployment count, the U-6 measure includes those “marginally attached” to the labor force (individuals who are not working nor looking for work but who express a willingness to work and have looked for a job within the last 12 months) and those employed part-time who want to work full-time (underemployed).

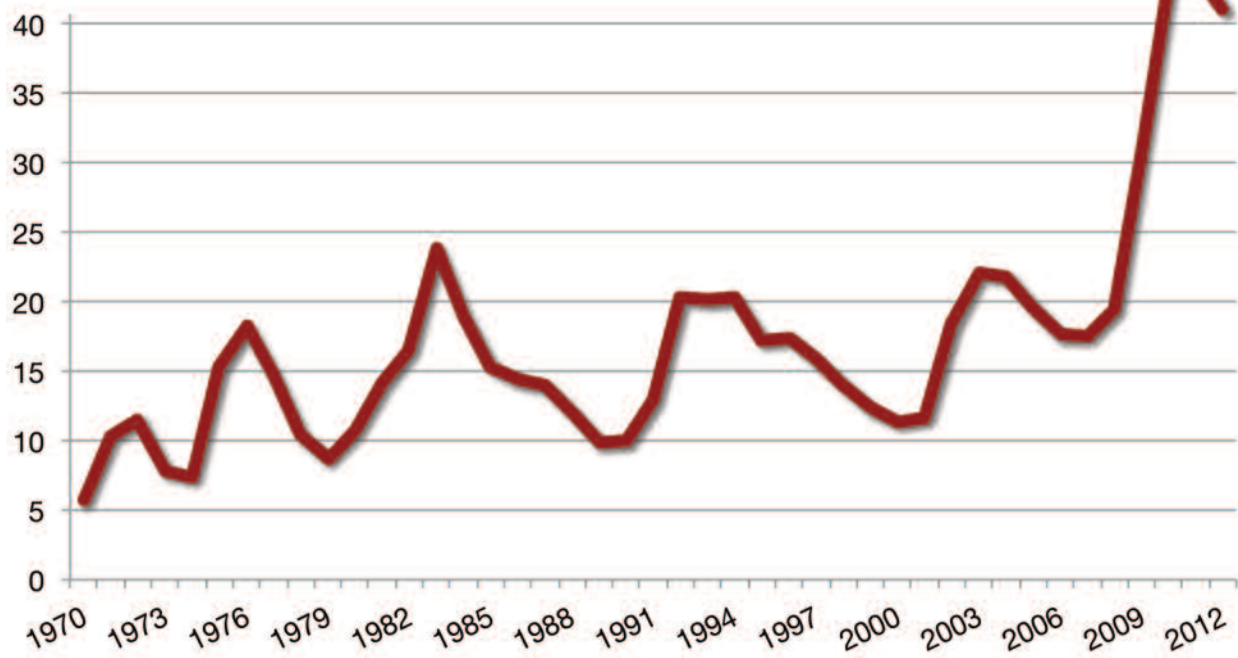
Long-term unemployment is spread throughout the labor market, broadly affecting workers in all sectors—an indication that the economy is not recovering at a pace similar to other economic recoveries. In the 2007 recession, the number *and* percentage of long-term unemployed soared past previous record highs, and has remained fairly steady ever since (Figure 7). In April, the number of long-term unemployed was 4.4 million. Aside from risking a loss of unemployment benefits, those who are out of work for long periods of time have less of a chance of finding employment at their previous level, if at all.⁶

In the words of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland:

*The long-term unemployment problem does not seem to be confined to workers in any particular age group, education level, or industry. Even though there are significant differences across these groups in normal times, the fraction of unemployed who have been unemployed long-term in this recovery jumped significantly in all of them.*⁷

The number of long-term unemployed Americans would be considerably higher if there were not so many dropping out of the workforce, in effect, ceasing to exist when it comes to official unemployment statistics.

FIGURE 7
PERCENTAGE OF LONG-TERM (OVER 27 WEEKS) UNEMPLOYED AMONG TOTAL UNEMPLOYED
1970-2012
(Millions)

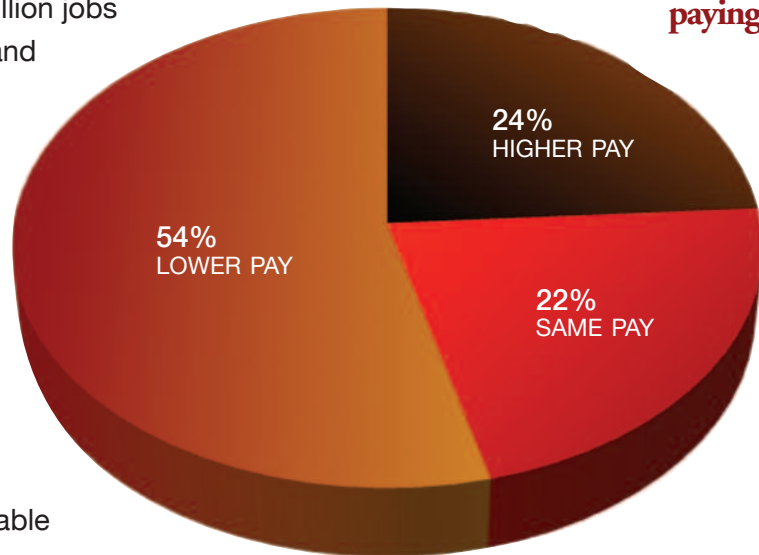


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Americans at a Disadvantage

The White House claimed in January 2013 that President Obama's policies had led to the creation of 5.8 million new jobs, but it neglected to acknowledge that a total of 8.9 million jobs were lost between November 2007 and February 2010, leaving the U.S. economy with 3.1 million fewer jobs than there were before the recession.⁸ However, the U.S. working-age population grew over those five years by 11.2 million. Further, many of the jobs that have been created since 2007 are not career-track jobs and many unemployed who went back to work after having been laid off took a sizeable pay cut (Figure 8).⁹

FIGURE 8
AMERICANS RE-EMPLOYED AFTER THE RECESSION
Compared to your job before the recession, is your current job higher, lower, or similar paying?



Source: John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

Middle-class American workers are squeezed out and subjected to prolonged unemployment, as foreign workers are hired in both low- and high-skilled jobs. While politicians talk about putting Americans back to work, they persistently support policies that have the opposite result. A growing number of public officials seem to believe that systematic unemployment for a large percentage of working-age Americans is an acceptable side-effect of immigration policy.

TABLE 2
FOREIGN-BORN EMPLOYMENT VS. NATIVE-BORN UNEMPLOYMENT
JANUARY 2009 TO SEPTEMBER 2012

	Increase in Foreign-Born Workers	NATIVE-BORN		
		Unemployed Workers	Unemployment Rate	Share of Labor Force
TOTAL LABOR FORCE	1,942,000	10,679,000	8.2%	83.8%
Building and Ground Maintenance	405,000	479,000	11.6%	64.0%
Construction and Extraction	74,000	823,000	13.6%	73.5%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	177,000	83,000	11.2%	58.1%
Food Preparation and Service	7,000	817,000	11.2%	79.1%
Transportation and Material Moving	57,000	819,000	10.6%	80.7%
Healthcare Support	87,000	244,000	8.1%	80.8%

Source: Center for Immigration Studies

Many researchers acknowledge that foreign-born workers are increasingly taking the limited number of available jobs, but some downplay the negative effect this has on native workers, such as Audrey Singer with the Brookings Institution. Singer says that “Sometimes, native-born people are not interested in certain jobs at the current wage levels.”¹⁰ The solution to this problem is not increasing immigration, which will only further drive down wages and drive more Americans out of the workforce.

TABLE 3
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE — NATIVE-BORN VS. FOREIGN-BORN
FIRST QUARTER (JANUARY TO MARCH) 2013

	UNEMPLOYMENT		U-6	
	Native-Born	Foreign-Born	Native-Born	Foreign-Born
Teens, 16-17	28.3%	25.2%	36.1%	33.7%
Less Than High School, 18+	20.2%	10.8%	32.3%	23.7%
Less Than High School, 18-29	30.8%	14.0%	44.0%	28.5%
High School Only, 18+	10.6%	8.4%	18.7%	18.5%
High School Only, 18-29	17.5%	12.5%	31.2%	26.1%
Some College, 18-29	10.1%	10.6%	19.1%	20.6%
Bachelor's Degree, 21-29	5.5%	6.6%	11.3%	13.1%

Source: Center for Immigration Studies

TABLE 4
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER, RACE, AGE & EDUCATION
MAY 2007 vs. MAY 2013

	May 2007	May 2013
Unemployment Rate – All	4.5%	7.6%
Teenagers	15.7%	24.5%
Whites	3.9%	6.7%
White Teenagers	13.9%	21.6%
Blacks	8.5%	13.5%
Black Teenagers	30.4%	42.6%
Hispanics	5.8%	9.1%
Hispanic Teenagers	19.7%	28.5%
Veterans (+ 18)	3.5%	6.6%
Gulf War-Era II veterans	—	7.3%
Less Than High School Diploma (+25 years)	6.7%	11.1%
High School Diploma (+25 years)	4.5%	7.4%
Some College (+25 years)	3.4%	6.5%
College Grad or Higher (+25 years)	2.0%	3.8%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Labor force participation in May 2013 (63.4%) is at the lowest point since 1979 and there are now 90 million people of working-age who are not in the labor force, including over 40 million native-born between the ages of 18 and 65.¹¹ Those who are not in the labor force include retirees, students, and homemakers, but it also includes tens of millions of people who are

being supported by government payouts, including those who are unable or simply unwilling to work. There are 11 million Americans receiving federal disability payments and over 47 million people participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly referred to as food stamps.¹² Some of those receiving food stamps may be working but many are not, at least not full-time. The large numbers of people not working is an immense fiscal burden for taxpayers.

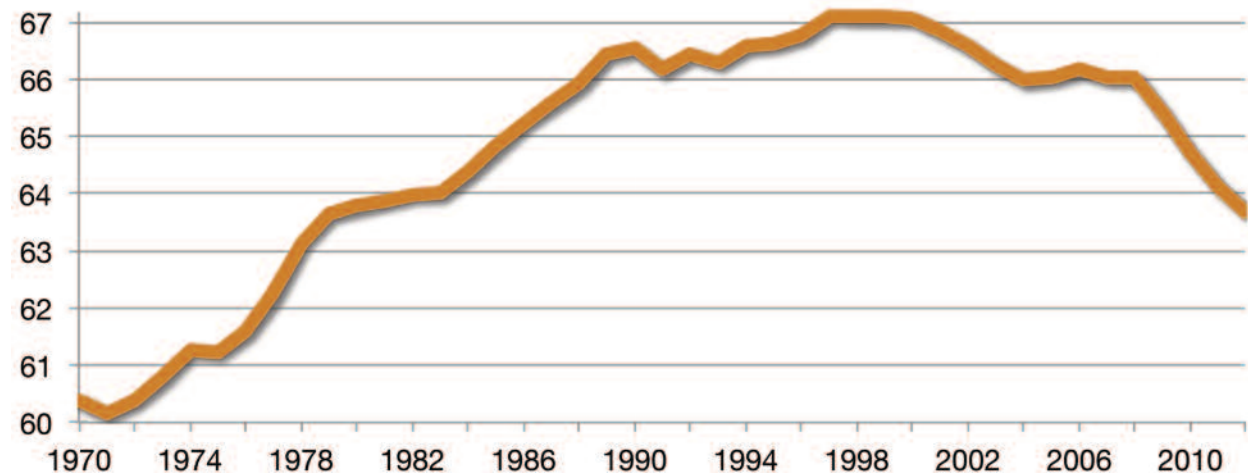
Quick•Facts

How the Economic “Recovery” Has Favored Foreign-Born Workers

- From 2008 to 2010, over a million foreign-born arrivals to America found work, many illegally.
— Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University¹³
- From June 2009 to June 2010, foreign-born workers gained 656,000 jobs while native-born workers lost 1.2 million.
— The Pew Hispanic Center
- Between 2010 and 2012, the employment gain for college graduates was 8.6% for foreign-born versus 4.5% for native-born.
— Urban Institute¹⁴
- Since President Obama took office, 67 percent of new jobs have gone to foreign-born workers. From 2009 to 2012, foreign-born workers gained employment 6.5 times the rate of native-born.
— The Center for Immigration Studies¹⁵

Less-educated workers, particularly Blacks, Hispanics, and younger workers, are disproportionately hurt by the importation of millions of foreign workers (Table 4). The May 2013 unemployment rate for teenagers was 24.5 percent. The unemployment rate for Blacks was 13.5 percent, 78 percent higher than the national average. In the New York City metropolitan area, which has an immigrant population of 29 percent, more than half of Blacks in the city held no job throughout 2012, and the number of discouraged Black workers tripled from 2008 to 2012.¹⁶ This disturbing trend prevails nationwide. Researchers have estimated that the unemployment rate for all Blacks in the United States without a high school diploma is 30 percent, while for Black male drop-outs it is over 50 percent.¹⁷

FIGURE 9
LABOR PARTICIPATION RATE — 1970 TO 2012
(PERCENTAGE OF WORKING-AGE POPULATION)



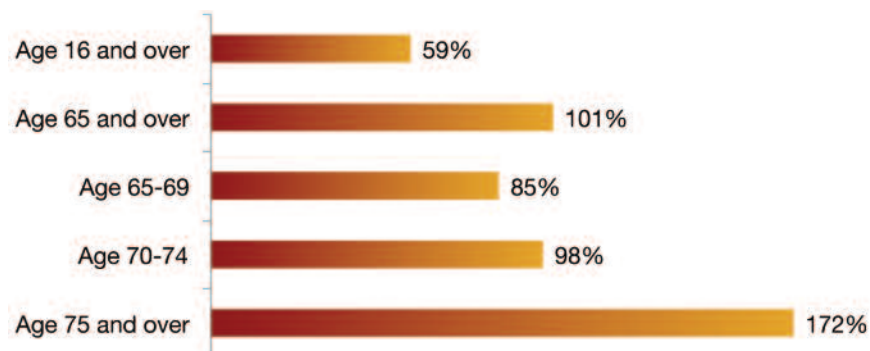
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

A Lost Generation?

A trend that is affecting the labor market is the increasing number of older workers as a proportion of the labor force. After steadily decreasing from 1970 to 1993, the number of workers 65 and over has reached a 43-year high, with more working full-time than part-time (56%-44%).¹⁸ From 1977 to 2007, the amount of workers over the age of 75 in the workforce increased 172 percent.¹⁹ This means that fewer older workers have been able to retire, and fewer jobs are available to younger workers.

There is talk of a “lost generation” of younger workers facing an economy that offers too many of them too few career opportunities. The unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2013 for 18-29 year olds without a high school diploma was 25.6 percent (30.8% for native-born).²⁰ For 18-29 year olds with only a high school diploma the unemployment rate was 16.9 percent (17.5% for native-born).²¹ These are the workers that compete directly for jobs with illegal aliens and low-skilled guest workers.

FIGURE 10
CHANGE IN EMPLOYED BY AGE
1977 TO 2007



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The situation is also very difficult for young people who have a college degree. The stated goal of the Obama administration is to significantly boost college enrollment, but the immigration policies supported by President Obama undermine the chances that college graduates will be able to

secure a good job.²² A survey released in May 2013 found that 41 percent of college graduates over the previous two years are working jobs that do not require a college degree, and only 16 percent of those who were scheduled to graduate in 2013 had already secured employment.²³ As the Center of Economic and Policy Research put it, “...at every age level, workers with four years or more of college are actually less likely to have a good job now than three decades ago.”²⁴ More than half of all recent college graduates are either unemployed or underemployed, meaning that they are working jobs that do not require their education and skill levels.²⁵ There are seven million college degree holders between 18-29 who are unemployed and underemployed.²⁶

Adding to the lack of good jobs available to large numbers of college graduates is the debt load that many carry from student loans. The average student is now graduating \$24,000 in debt.²⁷ President Obama and members of Congress from both parties want to increase the number of foreign students who can remain in the United States to compete for jobs after graduation, and add tens of thousands more skilled guest workers to an already overcrowded labor market.

For American teenagers, finding employment is becoming increasingly difficult. Many entry level jobs that once introduced them to the labor market and gave them valuable work experience, are now held by illegal aliens. Both the J-1 work study and H-2B low-skilled seasonal worker visas also contribute to pushing native-born teens out of the workforce. This disturbing trend will have profound future implications. Youth who do not enter the job market tend to remain unemployed or employed only sporadically throughout much of their adult lives, and earn lower wages when they **do** work.²⁸ They are also more likely to drop out of high school and have a much higher rate of teen pregnancy and criminal activity.²⁹

Growth vs. Prosperity

Economic growth means activity that leads to benefits that outweigh costs, i.e. growth that is “economical.”³⁰ When we talk about “economic growth” today, what we typically are referring to is increased economic activity over time, usually measured in the annual Gross Domestic Product, the GDP. But the GDP is a wholly inadequate measure of prosperity. It only measures growth, whether that growth is economical or not, and it gives no weight at all to environmental degradation or resource depletion, or to the negative social consequences that result from having a large number of unemployed citizens. In fact, the money spent on unemployment insurance and welfare benefits, like all government spending, **grows** the GDP.

TABLE 5
TOP TWENTY COUNTRIES BY GDP
2012

1	United States	\$ 15.66 trillion
2	China	\$ 12.38 trillion
3	India	\$ 4.74 trillion
4	Japan	\$ 4.62 trillion
5	Germany	\$ 3.19 trillion
6	Russia	\$ 2.51 trillion
7	Brazil	\$ 2.36 trillion
8	United Kingdom	\$ 2.32 trillion
9	France	\$ 2.25 trillion
10	Italy	\$ 1.83 trillion
11	Mexico	\$ 1.76 trillion
12	South Korea	\$ 1.62 trillion
13	Canada	\$ 1.45 trillion
14	Spain	\$ 1.41 trillion
15	Indonesia	\$ 1.21 trillion
16	Turkey	\$ 1.13 trillion
17	Iran	\$ 997 billion
18	Australia	\$ 961 billion
19	Taiwan	\$ 902 billion
20	Poland	\$ 802 billion

Source: CIA World Factbook

GDP measures the total amount of production of goods and services produced nationally. Even a person who earned or spent just one dollar in the U.S. last year made a contribution to its GDP. The extremely small GDP increase that results from illegal or unskilled legal immigration does not translate into improvements in the standards of living or the quality of life for most Americans, especially the poor. Furthermore, immigrants who send part of their wages back to their home countries, take that money out of the U.S. economy. In 2011, remittances to Latin America totaled \$61 billion.³¹

All that GDP can tell us is how big a national economy is, but it tells us nothing about how that economy operates, or how the wealth of that nation is distributed among its population. Mexico, for instance has the eleventh highest GDP in the world, so if that were a true measure of prosperity, there would be very few illegal aliens in the United States from Mexico.

Much of the growth the United States has experienced over the last three decades has been uneconomical. The recession has exposed the unsustainability of an economic system that only has the goal of growing ever

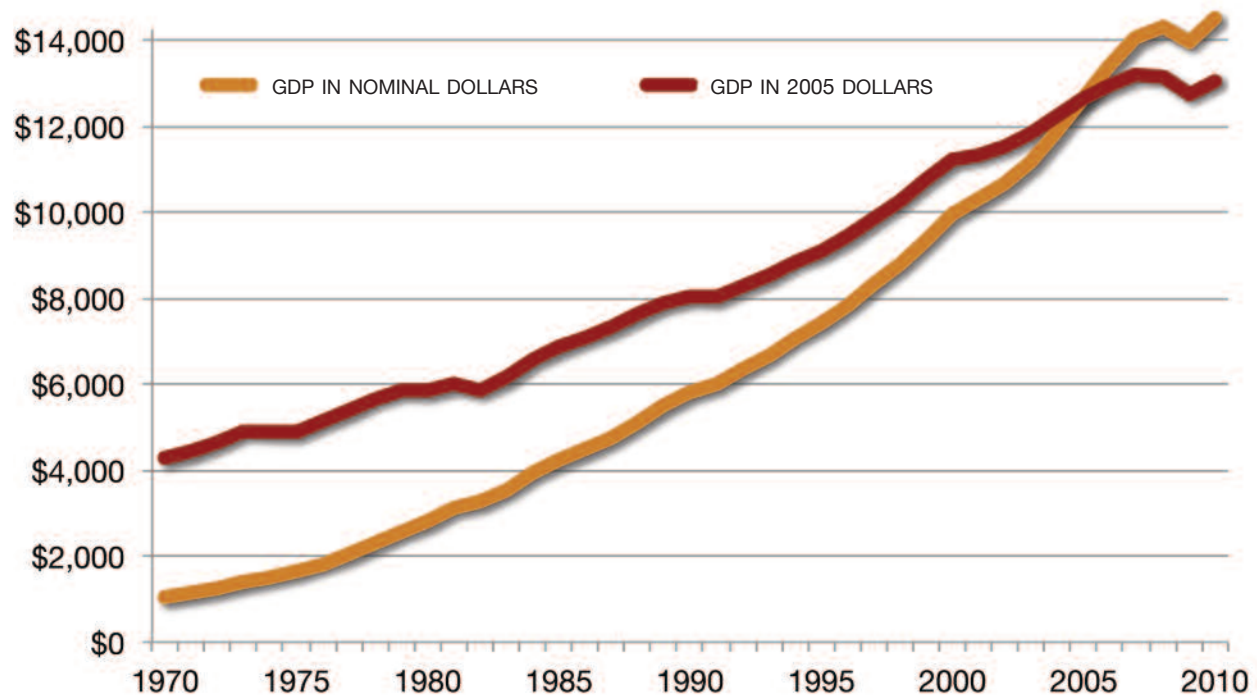
bigger despite the negative consequences. The economic benefits of mass immigration are enjoyed by the immigrants themselves and the employers who hire them.³²

The Congressional Research Service explains why:

In addition to reallocating national employment, immigration also is expected to redistribute national income by reducing the amount that accrues to native-born workers and increasing the amount that accrues to owners of capital and foreign-born workers. The difference between the pre- and post-immigration wages of native-born workers is not lost to the economy but is instead reallocated: part of the wages that previously went to native-born workers now goes to capital holders and part to foreign-born workers.³²

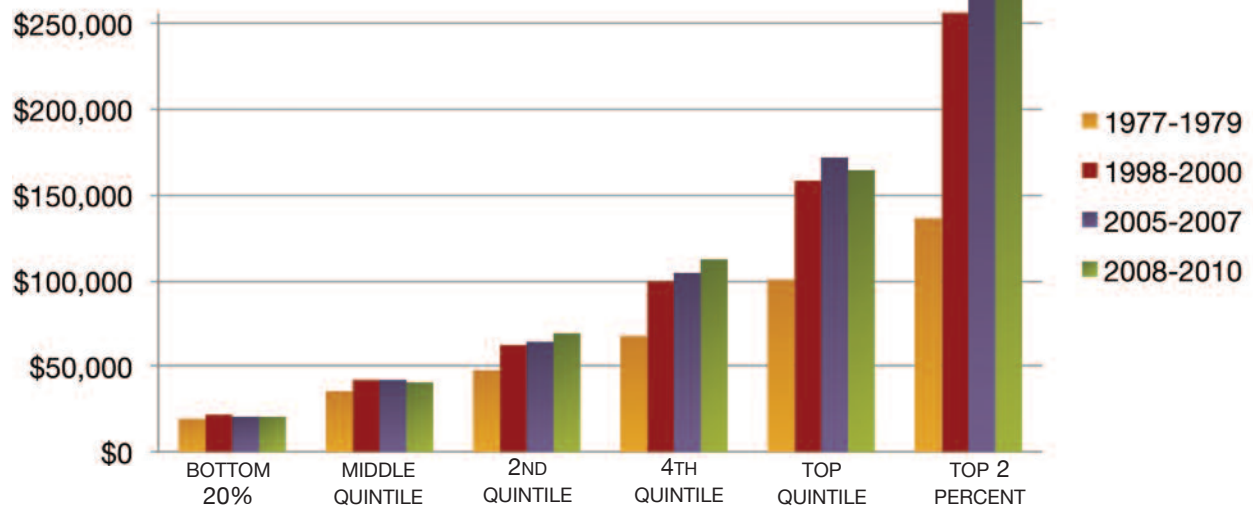
The vast majority of Americans are put at an economic disadvantage by mass immigration. Even during periods when the GDP was increasing at a “healthy” rate, the income gap grew by a wide margin. The inflation-adjusted minimum wage is 15 percent lower today than it was in 1979, and the middle class is struggling as rising food and gas prices, health care costs, and college tuition have outpaced earnings.³³ Aside from the issue of basic fairness within a society, serious income inequality ultimately undermines any economic system. Without a strong middle class, there is not enough demand to stimulate the economic activity that leads to widespread prosperity. As G.K. Chesterton put it many years ago, we cannot impoverish workers and then expect them to spend money as if they were flush with cash.³⁴

FIGURE 11
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT—1970 to 2010
(Millions)



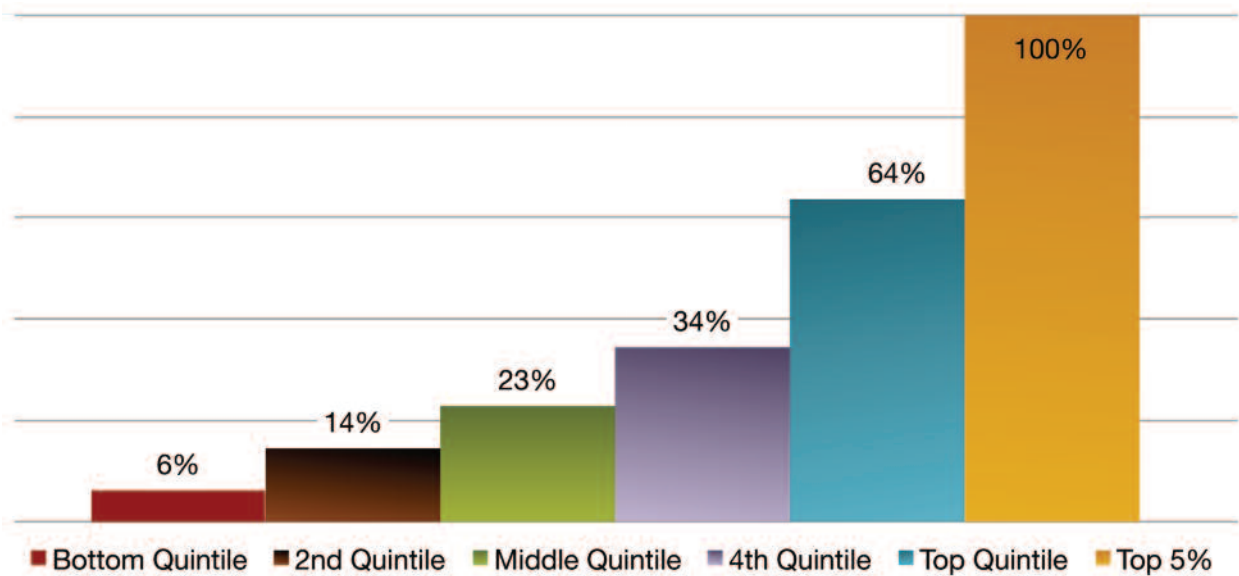
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

FIGURE 12
MEAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY QUINTILE AND TOP FIVE PERCENT
(2009 Dollars)



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Economic Policy Institute

FIGURE 13
PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN MEAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY QUINTILE AND TOP FIVE PERCENT
1977 TO 2010



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Economic Policy Institute

Jobs Americans *Are* Doing

A common argument heard from defenders of illegal immigration is that illegal aliens only take jobs that Americans won't do. Yet, jobs that are most associated with illegal aliens, such as landscaping, construction, and food service, are done mostly by the native-born. The one exception is seasonal farm labor, where illegal aliens make up the majority of workers. Still, about a third of farm laborers are U.S. citizens, and research clearly shows that paying higher wages to farm workers attracts more legal workers, including Americans.³⁵

TABLE 6
"IMMIGRANT" JOBS AMERICANS ARE DOING
Percentages represent the native-born share of each occupation.

Food prep and service (including fast food)	86%
Janitors	73%
Cooks	70%
Dishwashers	67%
Parking lot attendants	68%
Grounds maintenance workers	66%
Construction laborers	66%
Painters (construction and maintenance)	60%
Butchers and meat processing workers	63%
Roofers	60%
Taxi drivers and chauffeurs	58%
Maids and housekeeping workers	51%
Agricultural workers	48%

Source: Center for Immigration Studies

TABLE 7
PERCENTAGES OF ILLEGAL ALIEN WORKERS IN
LESSER-SKILLED OCCUPATIONS

Building and ground maintenance workers	19%
Construction workers	17%
All farm workers	25%
Food preparation workers	12%
Production workers	10%
Transportation and material moving workers	7%

Source: Pew Hispanic Center

While Americans are willing to take any job in the United States, the increasing numbers of low-skilled foreign job seekers that are available enable employers to pay low wages and offer very few benefits to their employees. This creates a disincentive for American workers to take these jobs, while it is an incentive for illegal aliens to live and work in the United States in anticipation of a future amnesty. The failure of the federal government to secure the border and enforce employment laws has led to the existence of eight million illegal aliens in the workforce, according to an estimate by the Pew Hispanic Center.³⁶

It is clearly evident that the "shortage" of workers that employers complain about is the lack of a large enough supply of workers in the United States who are eager to take low-wage jobs, often with no benefits and with little hope of advancement. Those who argue that the U.S. welfare system creates an incentive for some Americans **not** to work have a valid point, though often these critics fail to point out that jobs that are more attractive than welfare must be widely available in order to incentivize workers to enter the workforce.

The only way to do this is to pursue policies that benefit American workers, especially those who are lesser skilled. The best way to achieve this end is to reject amnesty and encourage

TABLE 8
RATIO OF JOB SEEKERS PER JOB OPENING
MARCH 2013

Construction	11.8
Mining*	4.8
Manufacturing	3.7
Transportation and Utilities*	3.5
Wholesale and Retail Trade*	3.4
Leisure and Hospitality	2.8
Other Services*	2.6
Professional and Business Services	2.1
Government workers	2.0
Education and Health Services	1.7
Financial Activities*	1.5
Information	1.4

Source: BLS (*not seasonally adjusted)

illegal aliens in the United States to voluntary comply with existing immigration law by returning to their home countries. That can be done by updating the I-9 employment verification paper form with an electronic web-based employment verification system, called E-Verify, and to vigorously prosecute employers who hire illegal workers.

There are many more job seekers than there are jobs, as Figure 14 illustrates. Keep in mind that the official unemployment figure for each occupation only includes those who are actively seeking work.

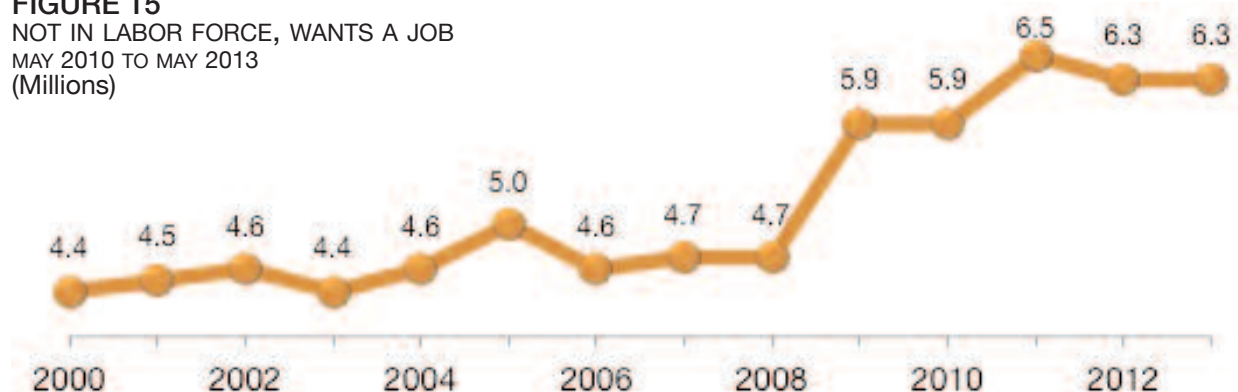
There are millions more who have given up hope of finding a job in this economy.

FIGURE 14
JOB GAP
MARCH 2013



Source: BLS (*not seasonally adjusted)

FIGURE 15
NOT IN LABOR FORCE, WANTS A JOB
MAY 2010 TO MAY 2013
(Millions)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Corporate profits have skyrocketed to all-time highs, but for more than a decade, wages and incomes have barely budged. It is our generation's task, then, to reignite the true engine of America's economic growth: a rising, thriving middle-class."

—President Obama, 2013 State of the Union Address



Wages

If there were a shortage of workers, there would be a corresponding increase in wages. In sectors of the labor market in which large numbers of foreign workers are employed, real wages have remained stagnant over time or have declined. No amount of rhetoric or data manipulation can void this reality. It is difficult to quantify the downward pressure of immigration on wages to a precise degree—economic research does not work that way—but the effect is impossible to ignore.

Those who work in occupations where large numbers of illegal aliens are employed have seen a reduction in their wages. In a 2004 study, Harvard economist George Borjas found that between 1980 and 2000, real wages for natives with less than a high school education fell by 7.4 percent, 2.1 percent for high school graduates, and 3.6 for college graduates.³⁷ For some groups, and in certain occupations the wages have declined even more substantially. A 2009 study found that between 1973 and 2007, real wages for male workers fell 10.5 percent for high school graduates and 22.3 percent for those without a high school diploma.³⁸

TABLE 9
EFFECT OF IMMIGRATION (LEGAL AND ILLEGAL) ON U.S. WAGES

	Increase in Immigrant Labor Supply	Effect on Wages
Less than a H.S. Diploma	25.9	-6.2
H.S. Graduate	8.4	-2.7
Some College	6.1	-2.3
College Graduate	10.9	-3.2
Post Graduate	15.0	-4.1
All Workers	10.6	-3.2

Source: Borjas, Center for Immigration Studies

Borjas recently released a study of the effect on wages from 1990-2010, and found that the wages for all workers were negatively affected during that period.

The wages for non-supervisory workers, what have traditionally been referred to as “blue-collar workers,” have remained stagnant since the 1970s, but in some industries have steadily declined, despite increased worker

productivity. In construction, wages for workers declined 14 percent despite rapidly rising corporate profits in the construction industry (Figures 17 and 18).

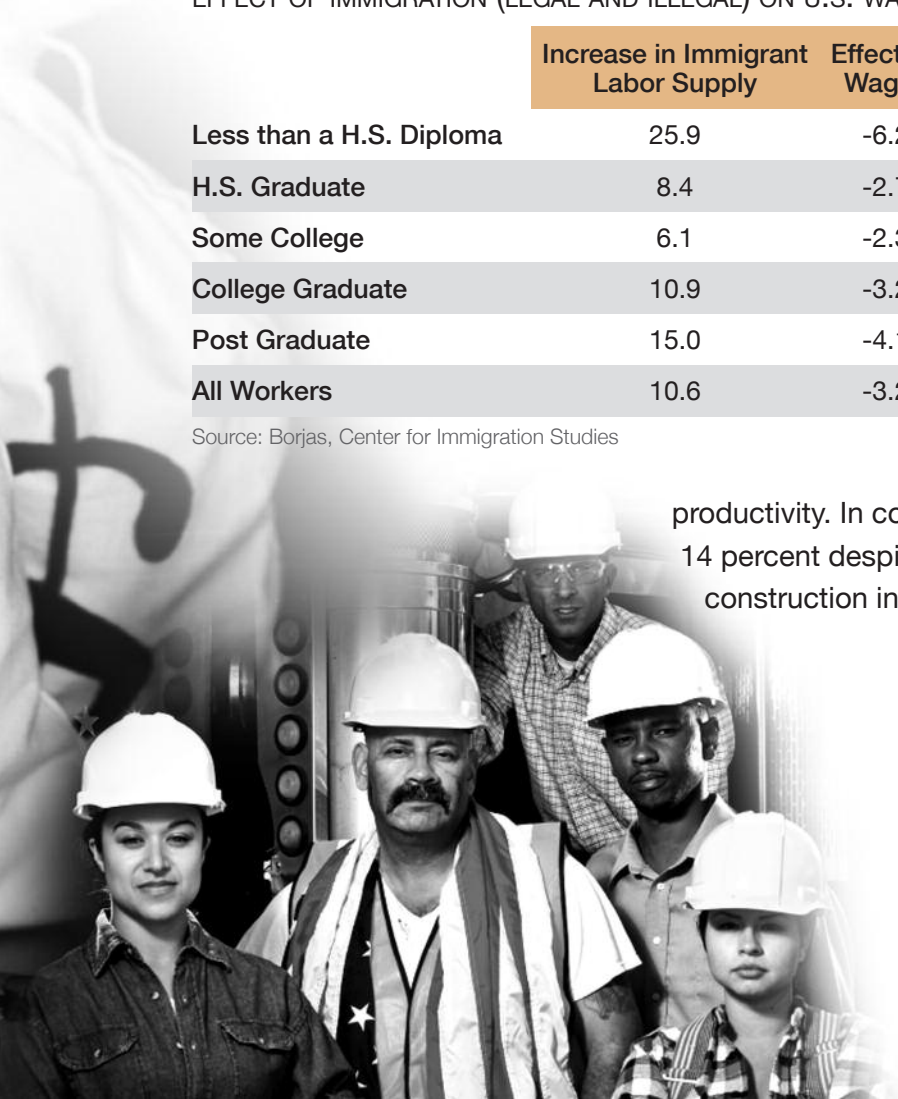
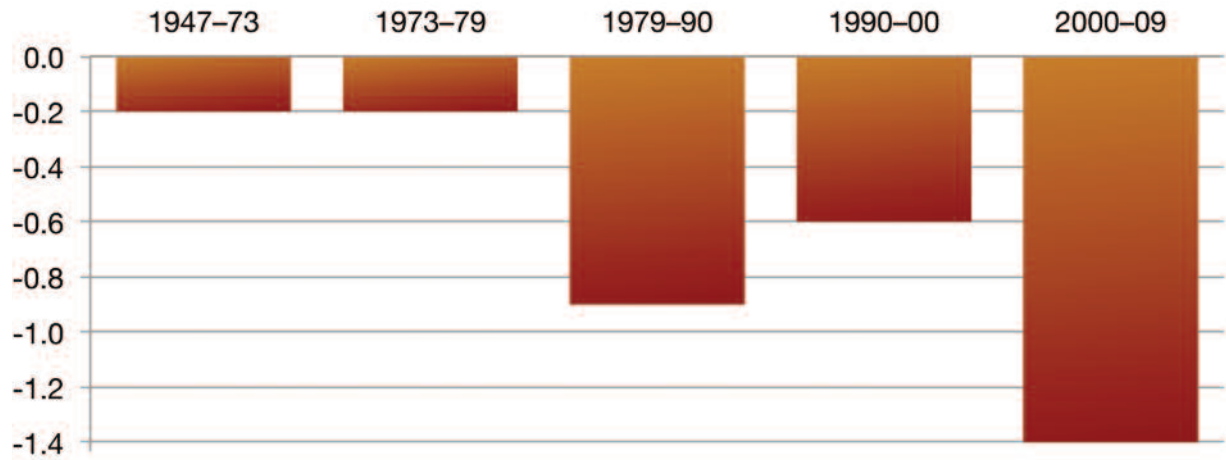
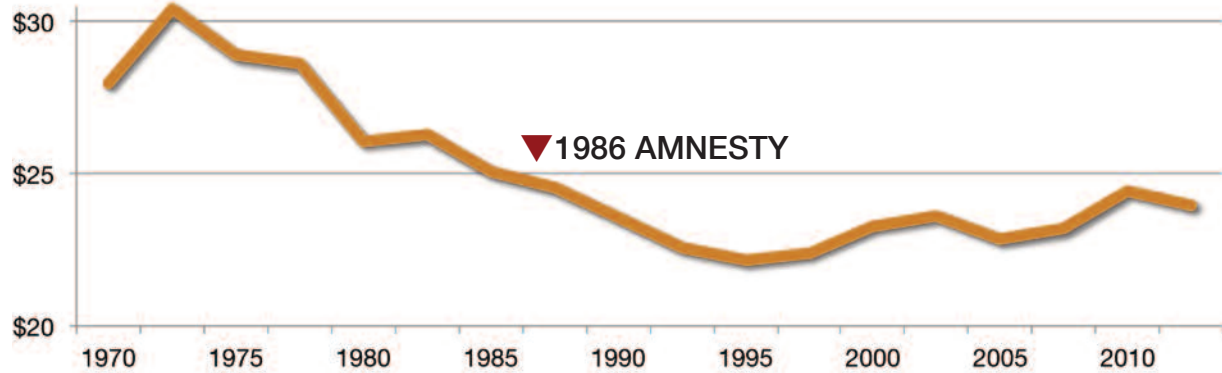


FIGURE 16

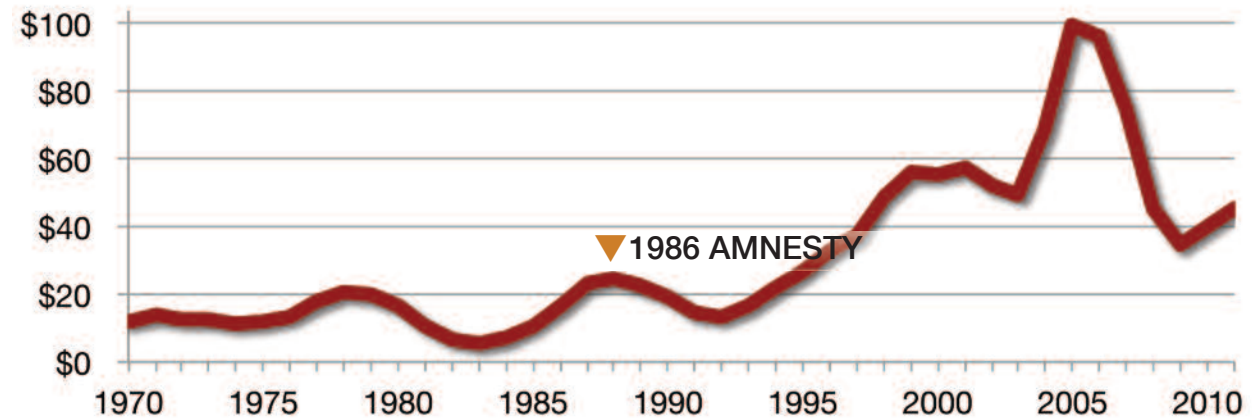
GROWTH IN REAL HOURLY WAGES MINUS GROWTH IN WORKER PRODUCTIVITY



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

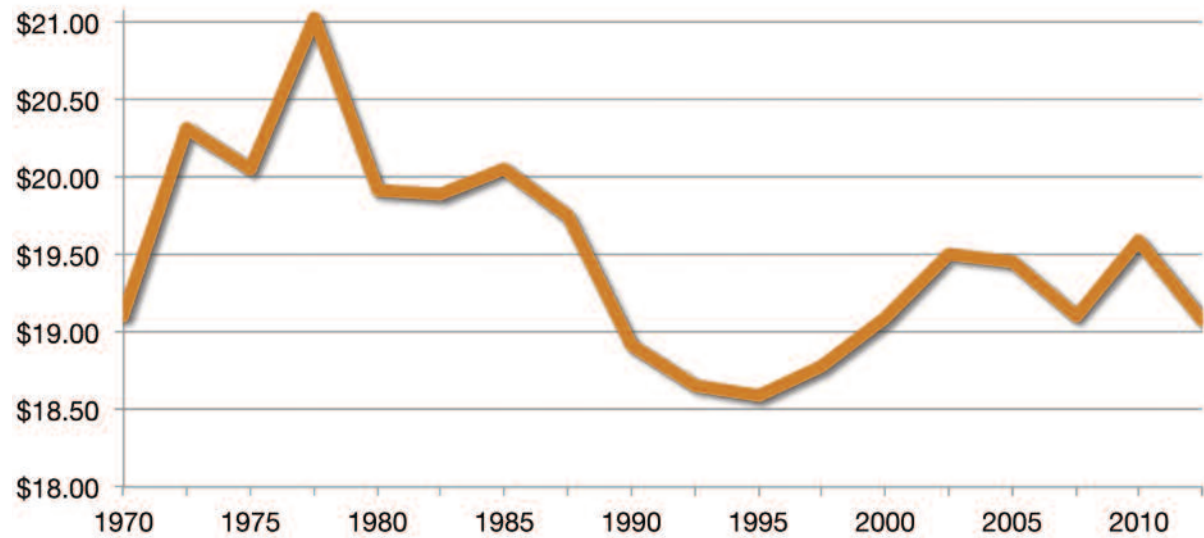
FIGURE 17CONSTRUCTION HOURLY WAGES (2012 DOLLARS)
1970 TO 2012

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

FIGURE 18CORPORATE PROFITS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (2012 DOLLARS IN BILLIONS)
1970 TO 2011

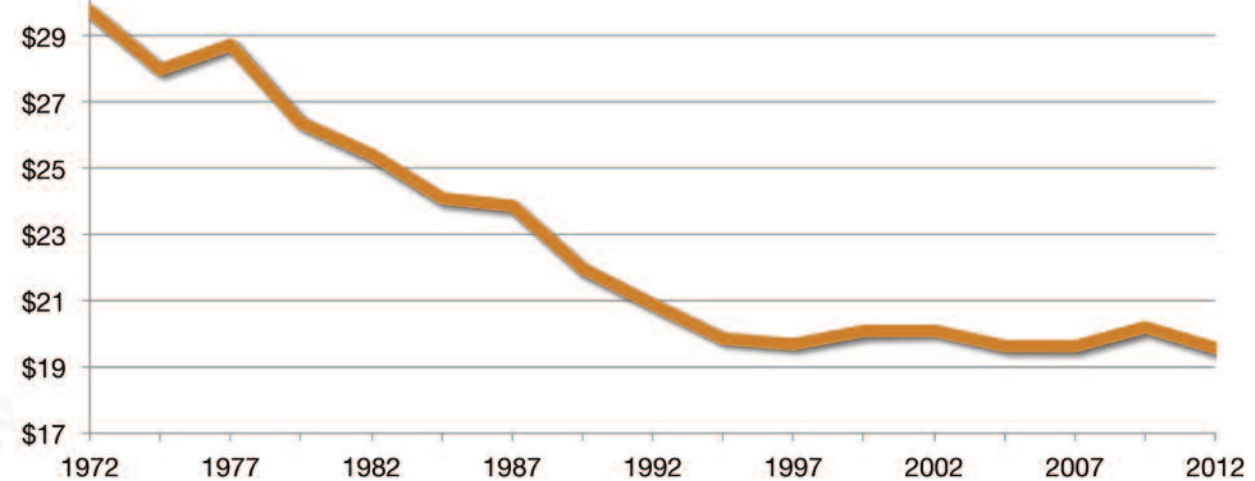
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

FIGURE 19
MANUFACTURING HOURLY WAGES (2012 DOLLARS)
1970 TO 2012



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

FIGURE 20
TRANSPORTATION AND WAREHOUSING HOURLY WAGES (2012 DOLLARS)
1972 TO 2012



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



Defenders of the Status Quo

Claims that mass immigration has led to wage increases, or resulted in greater employment opportunities for the average American worker, are categorically false. These claims are polemical arguments and do not comport with the available evidence. In order to demonstrate the benefits of mass immigration to the American people, one must disregard reality, and turn a blind eye to the misfortunes of millions of Americans. Americans who must deal with the actual consequences of our current immigration system favor increased border security and decreased levels of immigration.

While ignoring the enormous fiscal costs, open border economists also misrepresent the data they use to make their case. In the discussion of the “benefits” of amnesty and increased guest workers, writers for *The New York Times* may really believe that “there isn’t much of a debate at all” that they will have amelioratory effects on the U.S. economy, but this is because counterarguments are misconstrued or simply dismissed out of hand.³⁹

For instance, Giovanni Peri, who is often cited in defense of mass immigration, does not, as is often reported, claim that illegal immigration does not suppress wages for similarly skilled workers. He incorrectly argues that native workers are largely unaffected by competition from illegal aliens because they do not compete for the same jobs, which is a completely different argument. Peri comes to his conclusion by *assuming* that immigrants only do jobs Americans do not, and he ignores all the evidence that shows his assumption to be false.⁴⁰ However, he cannot assume away the data that clearly demonstrates the downward pressure on wages due to mass immigration, and critiques of his work have exposed the many flaws in his methodology.⁴¹

Here are the standard tricks of the trade for minimizing the impact of illegal immigration.

1. **CONCENTRATING ON URBAN AREAS** that have a high concentration of illegal aliens and relatively low levels of unemployment among low-skilled native workers to conclude that there is little competition among the groups, while ignoring the out-migration from these areas of low-skilled natives because of the lack of available jobs. Research has shown that native-born workers who have a high school diploma or less are likely to leave high immigration areas in search of better employment opportunities elsewhere.⁴²
2. **IGNORING THE COST OF LIVING FACTOR.** Comparing wages earned by illegal workers in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami with wages for illegal workers in smaller

urban areas or in rural localities distorts the conclusions. Economists who have studied its overall impact over time and across labor markets and have found strong evidence that illegal immigration adversely impacts less educated American workers.⁴³

3. **PICKING A SNAPSHOT OF THE U.S. ECONOMY** when wages were increasing and unemployment comparatively low while ignoring long-term trends that would invalidate their conclusions. For example, studies by Giovanni Peri and Madeline Zavodny are often cited as “proof” that immigration improves the opportunities for native workers in the United States. However, both researchers only include a narrow time period when jobs and wages were increasing, if only slightly, while excluding years on which wages are stagnant or decreasing, and unemployment was on the rise.
4. **SUBSTITUTING A CORRELATION FOR A CAUSE.** This is connected with the point above, and occurs when economists selectively use a narrow range of data, or simply concentrate on an increase in the GDP, and then credit immigration for any and all gains. For example, Zavodny used an “estimation technique” to avoid including evidence contrary to her preconceived conclusion and argued that all employment gains in the United States between 2000 and 2007 were attributable to the increase in the number of immigrants over that period. Her analysis ended at 2007, because by Zavodny’s crude logic, immigration would be responsible for the loss of almost 9 million jobs between 2007 and 2010.⁴⁴
5. **MISREPRESENTING THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF ILLEGAL ALIENS.** It is true that illegal immigration adds to the Gross Domestic Product, but this contribution is very small and is dwarfed by the fiscal costs incurred by American taxpayers. GDP is a poor indicator of economic prosperity and tells nothing about the overall distribution of wealth in a society. Also, illegal aliens send money back to their home countries harming local economies. In order to believe that illegal aliens are crucial to the U.S. economy, one has to accept the premise that jobs vital in our economy would never be filled by American workers, even if employers offered better wages and working conditions. The Center for American Progress trumpets an increase of 150 billion a year to be added to the GDP once amnesty is passed, without acknowledging that this is only less than 1% of the overall annual U.S. GDP and does not make up for the fiscal and economic harm that would result. CAP also buries the fact that their economic model found that wages for legal workers would increase substantially if illegal aliens were to return to their home countries.⁴⁵
6. **DOWNPLAYING THE EFFECT OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION BECAUSE IT MAINLY AFFECTS LOW-WAGE AMERICANS.** Julie Hotchkiss, an economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, found in her research that illegal aliens in the U.S. workforce “exert a downward pressure on wages for other workers.”⁴⁶ Focusing on Georgia, she found that legal workers

may see a loss of up to \$700 a year. This is in line with the work of most other economists and immigration researchers, at least those who do not work for the Center for American Progress. However, Hotchkiss thought the effect was “negligible” because those who suffered wage losses were a small part of the total workforce. Obviously illegal aliens aren’t competing for jobs with white-collar professionals, but this hardly makes the ill-effects of illegal immigration “negligible.” Gordon Hanson, writing for the Migration Policy Institute, concluded that “the gain in income to immigrants far outweighs the net loss to US natives” so the result of illegal immigration is an increase in “global economic well-being.”⁴⁷ Unfortunately, too many economists see less-skilled native-workers as statistics, not as their fellow citizens who deserve every opportunity to succeed in the U.S. economy.

7. **BAIT AND SWITCH ON ENFORCEMENT.** Some economists claim that because it costs money to enforce immigration laws, we should abandon enforcement efforts. The Migration Policy Institute came up with an absurd estimate of immigration enforcement costs of \$18 billion annually by tallying the entire DHS budget, including such things as the cost of policing copyright infringement. Most notoriously, MPI included the cost of administering amnesty programs implemented by the Obama administration as an enforcement cost.⁴⁸ The price of border security is well worth it, but the money must be well spent, as it has not been in the past. The federal government tends to believe that the solution to any problem is to throw money at it, and this leads to waste, fraud, and corruption. The reason the border is not secure is a problem of political will, not one of resources. And the cost of securing the border has to be measured against the cost of leaving the border unsecured. Would anyone suggest that we disband all local police forces because maintaining law and order is too expensive?
8. **THE CATO APPROACH.** Many of its positions, especially on foreign policy are reasonable, even if one disagrees with them. On immigration, however, Cato has abandoned any attempt to remain credible. It should come as no surprise that an organization that is funded by multinational corporations would support an immigration system that favors the economic interests of its benefactors, but Cato makes no attempt to be a legitimate source for information on immigration policy.⁴⁹ Cato is well-known for making fantastical claims about the economic benefits of open borders and insisting that mass immigration benefits all those who are willing to work hard, while only the lazy or unfit are negatively affected. When confronted with evidence-based arguments, Cato operatives claim that only they truly understand how an economy operates, and anyone who disagrees is uneducated, unintelligent, or a socialist.

Conclusion

Economic data reveal that wage stagnation and an increasing gap between worker productivity and earnings emerged in the 1970s, corresponding with a pronounced increase in immigration levels. While it is impossible, due to the differentiated occupational sectors and changing dynamics of the labor market, to calculate a precise correlation between the amount of the increase in immigration and the negative effect on the earnings and employment of native-born workers, it is impossible to ignore the obvious impact of importing tens of millions of foreign workers. The resulting economic *and* fiscal costs can only be dismissed by deliberately misrepresenting the evidence to support a political or economic interest that favors increased immigration.

Ignoring the foundational economic law of labor supply and demand, and one intuitively understood by those who know nothing else about economic theory, mass immigration proponents argue that adding tens of millions of workers to the United States labor market over the last forty years has had no negative impact whatsoever on the job situation for native workers, and some even make the case that it has had overwhelmingly positive impacts. If mass immigration were the key to economic prosperity, why did the highest level of immigration in our nation's history correspond with an economy that is on the precipice of collapse?

If one takes a small snippet of years, say between 1982 and 1987, or from 1992 to 1998, the U.S. economy can be viewed as on a perpetual upswing, with rapid hiring, a tightening labor market, and rising incomes. Likewise, looking at 1977 to 1982, or 2007-2011 would tell us just the opposite. Boom-and bust cycles do not an economy make, and so to look at the economic effects of immigration one has to measure a much longer period. Beginning in the 1970s, when the effects of the 1965 changes in immigration law began to take shape, the U.S. economy also began to fundamentally change. Immigration is not solely responsible for this change, but the operation of the U.S. immigration system since 1965 has put American workers at a greater economic disadvantage than if those reforms had not quadrupled annual admissions.

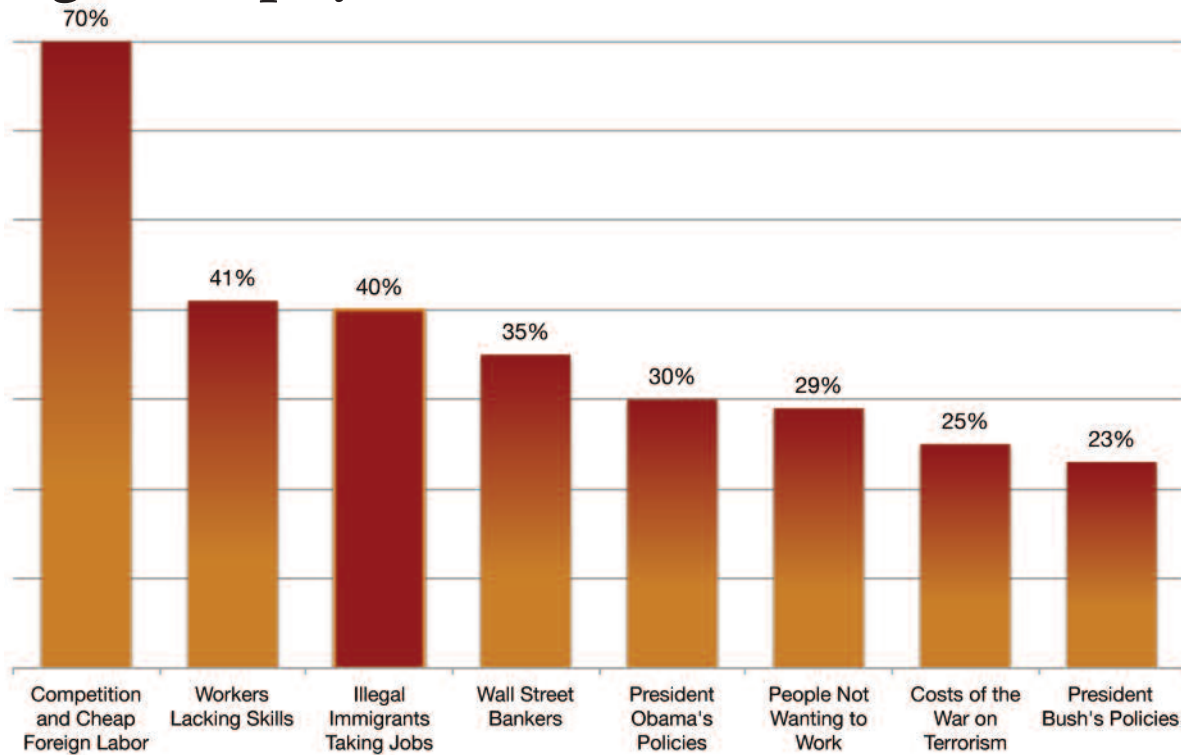
Those who continue to tout mass immigration are arguing against a workforce that is better educated, better paid, includes more native-born, and is comprised of a larger share of workers who are paying taxes and spending their wages locally. They also support having more residents collecting unemployment and welfare, and increasing the strains put on public schools by students who do not speak English, taking away resources from those who do. For those fighting for amnesty, increased immigration and expanded guest worker programs, their main argument is that it would increase the GDP, no matter the larger costs to society. Does

anyone really believe that mass immigration over the last thirty years has increased worker pay and created millions of jobs for American workers?

Good economic policy would encourage Americans to work by providing them with the incentive of well-paying jobs, not to incentivize employers to hire lower cost foreign workers. While the economy continues to perform poorly and tens of millions of Americans remain out of work, the solution our political leaders have come up with is to grant amnesty to illegal aliens and substantially increase legal immigration and guest worker programs.

Appendix:
**What do Americans think
about immigration and
the economy?**

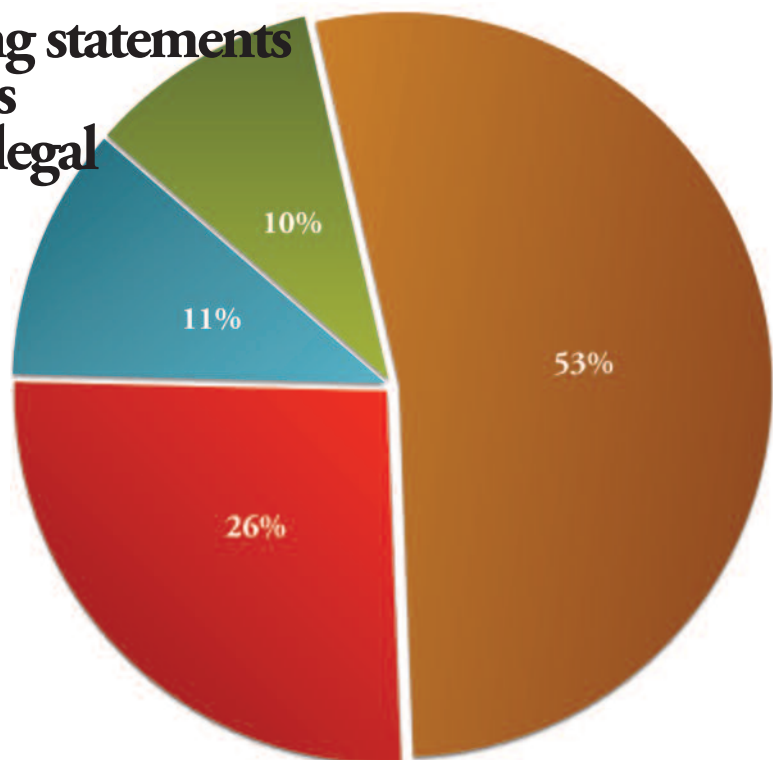
Which of these do you think are the major causes of high unemployment?



Source: John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development⁵⁰

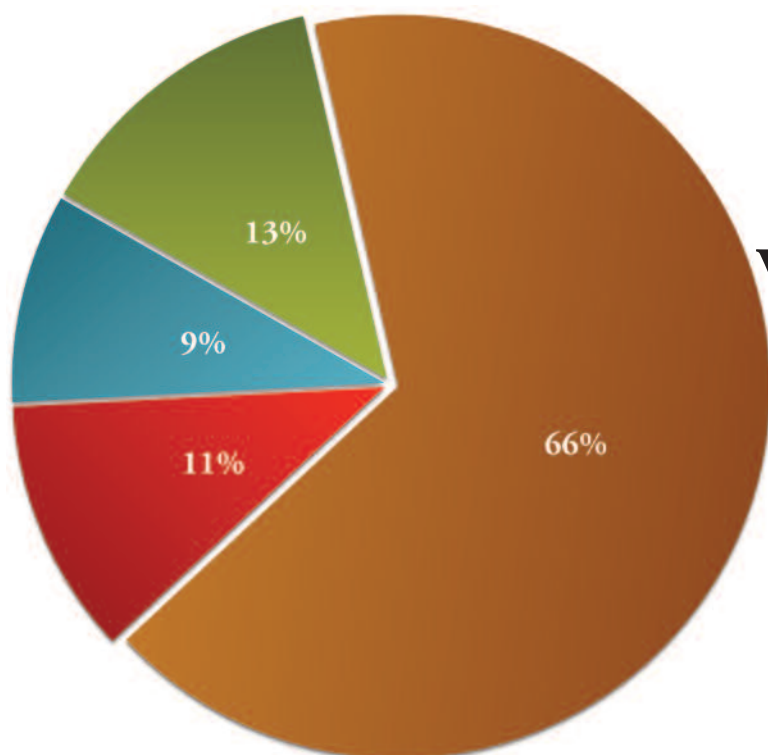
Which of the following statements best reflects your views about the impact of illegal immigration on the United States?

- Illegal immigrants tend to harm American workers by accepting jobs at lower wages than Americans are willing to work for, and, overall, harm our economy.
- Illegal immigrants tend to only take jobs that Americans will not do and, overall, benefit our economy.
- Illegal immigrants have little if any impact on American workers on the U.S. economy.
- Not sure.



Source: Pulse Opinion Research for FAIR⁵¹

Thinking about the impact of illegal immigration in your state and community, which of the following statements do you believe is most accurate?



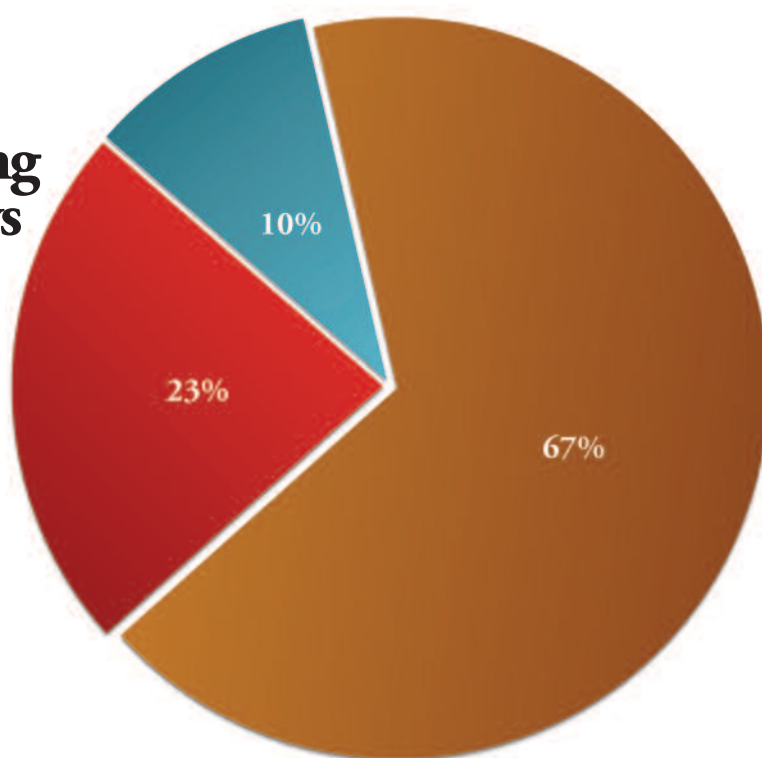
- Illegal immigrants are a net drain on public resources, using more in services like education and health care than they pay in taxes
- Illegal immigrants are a net benefit to public resources, paying more in taxes than they use in services like education and health care
- Illegal immigrants have little or no impact on public resources
- Not sure

Source: Pulse Opinion Research for FAIR⁵²

Which of the following best reflects your views of low-wage jobs that require relatively little education?

- There are plenty of Americans to do such jobs.
- There are not enough Americans willing to do such jobs.
- Not sure.

Source: Pulse Opinion Research for CIS⁵³



Citations: **Figures and Tables**

Figures

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Figure 7: BLS, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, Total Unemployed, Percent Unemployed 27 Weeks and Over, 1970-2012, Seasonally Adjusted.

Figure 8: Mark Szeltner, Carl Van Horn, and Cliff Zukin, “Diminished Lives and Futures: A Portrait of America in the Great-Recession Era,” John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development. Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, February 2012, p. 6 (http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/content/Work_Trends_February_2013.pdf).

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Figure 11: Bureau of Economic Analysis, “Current Dollar and ‘Real’ Gross Domestic Product,” <http://www.bea.gov/national/xls/gdplev.xls>, accessed April 22, 2013.

Figure 12: Elizabeth McNichol, Douglas Hall, David Cooper, and Vincent Palacios, “A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Economic Policy Institute, November 15, 2012 Appendix Table 1A, pp. 68-70 (www.cbpp.org/files/11-15-12sfp.pdf).

Figure 13: McNichol, et. al., “A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends.”

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Figure 17: Analysis of BLS data, Table B-8, “Average hourly and weekly earnings of production and nonsupervisory employees on private nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted: Construction Industry: 1970-2012” (<http://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab8.htm>).

Figure 18: Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Income and Product Accounts Tables, Tables 6.17B, 6.17C, 6.17D, “Corporate Profits Before Tax by Industry” <http://www.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=9&step=1#reqid=9&step=3&isuri=1&903=241>)

Figure 19: Analysis of BLS data, Table B-8, “Average hourly and weekly earnings of production and nonsupervisory employees on private nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted: Manufacturing Industry: 1970-2011.”

Figure 20: Analysis of BLS data, Table B-8, “Average hourly and weekly earnings of production and nonsupervisory employees on private nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted: Transportation and Warehousing Industry: 1970-2012.”

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Table 2: Steven A. Camarota and Karen Zeigler, “Who Got Jobs During the Obama Presidency?: Native and Immigrant Employment Growth, 2009 to 2012,” Memorandum, Center for Immigration Studies, p. 6 (<http://cis.org/sites/default/files/camarota-jobs-during-obama.pdf>).

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