

# New Mexico's border issues

Literature



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Illegal immigration refers to the immigration of people across national borders without visas or valid documents. Illegal immigration gives rise to a larger set of social issues in areas such as economy, social welfare, education and health, smuggling and crime. The international border between the United States and Mexico runs for about 3,141 km, which is frequently crossed over by countless illegal immigrants from Mexico. The reason for these illegal crossings is the difference in living standards and wages in the US and Mexico. Even though there is a large group of border patrol personnel guarding the border, alien immigrants can still sneak in through various locations due to lack of funds and consistent patrol in the area.

. According to an estimate, over a million people who cross over to the US, 45 percent end up in becoming agricultural laborers in various US states. The economic and social costs of illegal immigration are enormous. It is estimated that about 10,000 illegal aliens cross into the US every day, with an annual figure reaching to 3 million. A third of these immigrants are caught and returned to their home country; while half of them become US residents permanently. About 9 to 11 million illegal immigrants reside in the US at present.

Due to the acceptance of low wages by illegal immigrants in New Mexico and other states, about 1.8 million native workers suffer losing not only their wages, but also jobs, raising the cost of state welfare to US\$ 15 billion annually. According to the National Academy of Sciences, it costs \$89,000 to pay for an alien immigrant during his lifetime stay in the US.

However its not only the loss of job or revenue, but 80 percent of cocaine and 50 percent of heroin in US is smuggled through new Mexico borders by these illegal immigrants. The illegal immigrants cost billions of dollars every year to the American taxpayers; especially the free treatment offered to illegal aliens. Due to which many hospitals New Mexico, Arizona and California has been closed down. The total economic cost of illegal immigrants is estimated to in between 67\$ to \$87 billion.

Since 1986 US has embarked efforts to restrict illegal immigration with the arrival of Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) which expanded the funding for the US border patrol. Between 1986 and 1996, Congress and President took a series of restrictive actions to regain the control of US and Mexico border. However despite these measure and IRCA act, both legal and illegal immigration continued to rise. The federal government in 1993 initiated another plan to install more officers at the border. These plans have fundamental weakness due to less defended border at many areas. For example when mobilization of forces was activated in El Paso and San Diego, the flow of migrants turned to Arizona and Texas creating new problems in these states.

The push by US authorities pushed the immigrants to cross over from more remote deserts and mountains and rivers where its much more hard for border patrol to capture them. Another loss has been the higher rate of injury and death that also accelerated the cost of spending on already poor counties in New Mexico and border states.

Even though the Border Patrol budget has been increased 10 times between 1986 and 2002, but the arrival of immigrants has also risen. In 2005, New Mexico declared emergency due to the rise in drug smuggling, kidnapping and murder in the state. The State governor criticized the federal government and Congress by mentioning total lack of support from the Border Patrol. In recent days the illegal immigrant issue has become a national debate with politicians on both sides favoring and disfavoring the issue due to their own vested interests.

There have been suggestions to construct fence, wall, and deployment of more Border Patrol agents to address the cross border issue. In reality the problem is much bigger than it seems. Constructing a few miles wall or fence will not bring any change, unless realistic approach is taken to tackle the issue. Even after the constructions of fence in San Diego the flow of immigrants increased; as fence provides an excuse for Border Patrol to be less careful

Analyst believe that US polices have failed to produce any result. A new approach is needed to address the issue. The solution to the problem lies in the undocumented migration, which if made legal can prove more productive. Under the current immigration law, all countries have same quota of 20, 000 thousand legal immigrants per year; which is same for the Mexico, the closest US neighbor. A more realistic policy would be to provide temporary visas, (which President Bush has recently announced), however greater emphasis should be paid to the Mexicans; as Mexico is the major part of the problem.

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