

Undocumented workers: should deportation be part of american immigration policy e...

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The debate about including deportation of undocumented workers in the American Immigration Policy has been around for quite some time now. On one hand, there are those who argue that deportation is the only way to rid the country of illegal immigrants (who take up jobs that are supposed to be taken by U. S. citizens and legal migrants), while, on the other side of the debate, there are those who argue that deporting illegal workers would have a detrimental effect on the country's economy. Although there is no middle ground for both sides of the debate, one thing is clear: a comprehensive immigration reform is necessary.

Statistics on the number of undocumented workers living in United States vary depending on the source; on the lower side, the number is approximately 7 million, while, on the higher side, the number is approximately 20 million. According to Center for Immigration studies, the number of undocumented immigrants was 11 million, which is a considerable drop from the previous year; the number of illegal immigrants in 2007 was 12.5 million. According to the United States Immigration Law, undocumented workers become illegal due to three reasons: entering the country with the necessary authorization, violating legal entry terms and overstaying past the legal entry. Violating the immigration law attracts a 6 month imprisonment for the first offense and 2 years for subsequent offenses.

Among the measures employed over the years to deter illegal immigration include workplace investigations and manning the border points. In some cases, detention maybe used to punish the illegal immigrants. The most controversial means of dealing with illegal immigrants, however, is deporting

them back to their countries of origin. Deportation may be issued for security reasons, for protecting jobs and for protecting resources. The people to whom deportation may be issued include those who are not native-born and those that are not naturalized citizens of the U. S.

Every year, millions of people from different parts of the world apply for U. S. work permits. However, only a small number of the applicants gains entry into the country. Given this background, it would be illogical to allow undocumented workers to stay within the country. Therefore, it makes sense to include deportation of undocumented workers in the immigration policy. This should send a message that there are people who follow the legitimate process and that process should be respected. Apart from failing to follow the standard procedures before gaining entry into the country, undocumented workers underbid U. S. citizens for jobs and take up jobs that should be taken by citizens and legitimate immigrants. In addition, majority of the undocumented workers do not pay taxes because they are often paid in cash. This is a mockery to the tax-paying citizens of the country because people who do not contribute anything to the national kitty line up to get benefits and healthcare that should be enjoyed by U. S. citizens and legitimate immigrants working in the country.

However, there are dissenting voices that argue that deporting undocumented workers would be more catastrophic than allowing them to stay. Therefore, according to the dissenting voices, it would be inappropriate to include deportation of undocumented workers in the United States Immigration Policy. Firstly, it would be expensive to deport all the illegal workers. Given their huge numbers, the government would be forced to

spend heavily on tickets, hotel rooms and other services that are necessary during deportation. Apart from incurring huge costs, the move to deport undocumented workers would be hurtful to the economy. Although not many people would admit it, undocumented workers contribute to the country's economy. Some employers prefer undocumented workers because they pay them less money for services that would be costly if they employed U. S citizens.

On the basis of the contribution that immigrants make to the country's economy, it makes sense to give undocumented workers amnesty. For instance, immigration has been one of the major drivers of growth in the United States and other developed nations such as the United Kingdom. More than one third of the economies could be attributed to immigration in the last couple of years. This means that immigrants contribute to the GDP as much as the domestic-born populations. Therefore, the argument that huge economic costs would be incurred because of granting amnesty to undocumented immigrants is nothing more than unfounded claim.

Again, not every undocumented worker came to the country knowingly. Some young children were brought along by their parents. However, the fact that their parents came to the country as illegal immigrants makes them illegal too. Given this complex situation, the government recently announced some changes to the Homeland Security Policy that would see some undocumented workers apply for a two-year stay to avoid deportation. This category would cover illegal immigrants under the age of 30 who came to the country before attaining the age of 16. This would act as a stop gap measure as the Congress works on a comprehensive immigration reform.

Nevertheless, before deciding on whether to include undocumented workers in the U. S. Immigration Policy or not, it would be essential to have a look at deportation trends. Before 1996, the average number of deportations per year was between 20, 000 and 40, 000. However, the introduction of AEDPA and IIRIRA Acts of 1996 saw the number of deportations increase to approximately 180, 000 by the year 2005. Annually, less than half of the people are deportation criminal grounds. Lobby groups argue that the haphazard manner in which deportations are carried out lately poses a danger to the safety of those deported. For example, the Washington Office on Latin America argues that night deportations and the practice of deporting immigrants to the border cities riddled with drug problems and criminal activity increases the risk of gang elements preying on the newly deported people.

At this stage, including undocumented workers to the country's immigration policy appears somewhat misleading. Over the last couple of years, more than half of the deportations have been due to reasons other than criminal grounds. This is despite the fact that the contribution of the undocumented workers to the country's economy cannot be gainsaid. A more pragmatic approach including giving amnesty to undocumented workers would be more appropriate at this stage. This would avoid the huge costs involved in deportation. Deportation should only be reserved for criminal elements that break the law and those that pose a security threat to the country. Above all, the economic benefits that the country would stand to gain by giving amnesty to undocumented workers are far much great than the disadvantages given.

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