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IMMIGRATION MYTHS

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Myths about Immigration

MYTH: Immigrants increase the Crime Rate

FACT: Recent research has shown that immigrant communities do not increase the crime rate and that newly arriving immigrants tend to commit fewer crimes than native born Americans. Ruben Rumbaut, a professor of sociology at Brandeis University, found that “even as the undocumented population has doubled to 12 million since 1994, the violent crime rate in the United States has declined 34.2 percent and the property crime rate has fallen 26.4 percent.” Cities where there are high levels of immigrants, such as New York, Chicago and Miami experienced declines in violent crime during this period. Other cities with numerous immigrants, such as El Paso and Laredo, are among the country’s safest cities to live in.

(Source: Immigration Policy Center, “Immigrants and Crime: Are They Connected,” December, 2007, <http://www.ailf.org/ipc/factchecks/Crime-FactCheck10-16-07.pdf>; Ruben Rumbaut and Walter Ewing, *The Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Law Foundation, 2007); Radley Balko, “The El Paso Miracle,” ReasonOnline, July 6, 2009, <http://www.reason.com/news/show/134579.html>)

MYTH: Immigrants Don’t Pay Taxes

FACT: Undocumented immigrants pay taxes. Between 50-75% of undocumented immigrants pay federal, state and local taxes. They also contribute to Medicare and provide as much as 9 billion dollars a year to the Social Security Fund. Further still, undocumented workers pay sales taxes where applicable and property taxes—directly if they own and indirectly if they rent.

(Source: “The Impact of Unauthorized Immigrants on the Budgets of State and Local Governments,” Congressional Budget Office, (Dec. 2007), p. 6; Immigration Policy Center, “Undocumented Immigrants as Taxpayers,” (November 2007), <http://www.ailf.org/ipc/factchecks/UndocumentedasTaxpayer.pdf>; Travis Loller, “Many Illegal Immigrants Pay up at Tax Time,” USA Today (April 11, 2008), http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/taxes/2008-04-10-immigrantstaxes_N.htm?csp=34)



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MYTH: The Catholic Church Supports Illegal Immigration and ‘Open Borders.’

FACT: The Catholic Church does not support law breaking or open borders. “The Bishops of the United States recognize the validity of and need for effective border enforcement that protects Americans from criminal and terrorist elements, allows for orderly and legal immigration, and respects the sovereign rule of law of the United States.”

(Source: USCCB, <http://www.usccb.org.mrs/borback.shtml>)

MYTH: Immigrants are a Drain on the United States Economy

FACT: The immigrant community in the United States is, in fact, a net benefit to the economy. A recent Congressional Budget Office Report states that “over the past two decades, most efforts to estimate the fiscal impact of immigration in the United States have concluded that, in aggregate and over the long term, tax revenues of all types generated by immigrants—both legal and unauthorized—exceed the cost of the services they use.” Research reported by both the CATO Institute and the President’s Council of Economic Advisors reveals that the average immigrant pays a net 80,000 dollars more in taxes than they collect in government services. For immigrants with college degrees the net fiscal return is \$198,000.

(Source: CATO Institute, CATO Handbook for Congress: Policy Recommendations for the 108th Congress, <http://www.cato.org/pubs/handbook/hb108/hb108-63.pdf>; Executive Office of the President: Council of Economic Advisors, “Immigration’s Economic Impact,” June 20, 2007, http://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/cea_immigration_062007.html; Congressional Budget Office, The Impact of Unauthorized Immigrants on the Budgets of State and Local Governments (December, 2007))

MYTH: Undocumented Immigrants are a Burden on the Healthcare System

FACT: The National Immigration Law Center reports that the typical immigrant spends less than half the dollar amount for medical services when compared with the typical U.S. citizen. For example, in Los Angeles County, “total medical spending on undocumented immigrants was \$887 million in 2000 – 6 percent of total costs, although undocumented immigrants comprise 12 percent of the region’s residents.” Further, federal law generally bars undocumented immigrants from using Medicaid benefits except in emergency situations. Even then, immigrants as a group are significantly less likely to use emergency room services than are American citizens.

(Source: Center for American Progress, Immigrants in the U.S. Healthcare System (June 7, 2007); National Immigration Law Center, “Health Care Expenditures for Immigrants are Lower than for Citizens,” (May, 2009), www.NILC.org; Dana P. Goldman, James P. Smith and Neeraj Sood, “Immigrants and the Cost of Medical Care,” Health Affairs 25, no. 6 (2006): 1700-1711)