

Voter

The League of Women Voters
Of Fremont, Newark and
Union City



Celebrate our 50th



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF FREMONT, NEWARK, AND UNION CITY

50th Anniversary Celebration *

Something to Celebrate!

Our local League of Women Voters was formed in 1957, first in the new city of Fremont and later expanding to include Newark and Union City. Over the years, we have registered thousands of voters, hosted scores of candidate forums, published and distributed voter information, been a leading voice for change and government accountability, and produced a long-running cable TV show focused on community issues.

Please join us for dinner, a stroll down memory lane, and more. It will be a party—a celebration of the important role the League of Women Voters has played in our community over the past 50 years!

Recognition of
Founding
Members

Mary Ann Dillon
Julianne Howe

Special
Appearances by
Delaine Eastin

Visiting Professor at Mills College
Former California Superintendent
of Public Instruction

* Former Member of LWVFNUC
Janis Hirohama

President
League of Women Voters of California



Saturday, October 27, 2007

6:00 Registration
No-host cocktails
7:00 Dinner

* The Mirage Room
at the Flamingo Palace
Peralta Blvd. at Maple St.
Fremont

For more information
Please call
John Smith (207-9057) or
Syeda Yunus (683-8947)

\$50.00 per person
Include an anniversary gift to LWVFNUC by
Reserving at the Patron level—\$100 per person
For Reservations visit
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Today I had the privilege of moderating Voting Matters, our monthly cable program. It was a special program in honor of our upcoming 50th anniversary celebration. I had the pleasure of interviewing three former LWVFNUC Presidents, Phyllis Merrifield (term 1970-71), Sandi Pantages (term 1984-85) and Miriam Keller (1997-2001 and 2005 – 2007). We discussed how our League has changed and how it has stayed the same throughout the years and the important issues then and now. A mere half hour is simply not enough to discuss in any depth the role LWVFNUC has played in our community. We have dealt with such a wide variety of issues impacting our daily lives, from the role of ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments) to Childcare laws, to the Hill initiative. Be sure to watch Voting Matters and see what these outstanding leaders have to say about their experiences with the League.

Our plans for the 50th anniversary are rolling forward. Much of the preliminary work has been done thanks to the dedicated 50th anniversary team. Invitations will be sent out shortly, but don't wait for an invitation; you can register for the October 27th event on the website at www.lwvfnc.org. Please contact John Smith, Publicity Director or Alex Starr, who is chairing the 50th anniversary committee, to volunteer your ideas and help. We are still finalizing the program and you still have time to provide your input and contribute your creativity to the celebration.

Our immigration study process is getting closer to the end. We will be holding two special meetings in November to arrive at consensus on our position on this issue. As part of this study process, we held a public forum on September 15, 2007. The forum featured five informative and thought provoking panelists, thanks to Barbara Friedrich and Ken Ballard, Program Co-VP's. The goal of the forum was to take an analytical and as factual as possible, approach to understanding the issues related to immigration as a whole and specifically, documented and undocumented immigrants. Clearly, these are complex issues, and there is a plethora of information, opinion and rhetoric. We chose the "League way" to approach these issues with an open mind and to carefully evaluate the substance of the information underlying the debate. Thus, we hope to arrive at consensus as to what makes the best sense from a public policy perspective.

And that approach has not changed in our fifty years. Some things, we hope, will continue to stand the test of time.

—Syeda Yunus, President

BOARD BRIEFS

At the September 13 meeting, the board discussed:

- New Homeowners Association client, completed one election
- Immigration study – consensus meetings to be held on November 19th and 26th
- Candidates forum for Newark in October (October 3)
- LWVC Workshop on September 29th in Oakland.

NEWARK CANDIDATE FORUM

Wednesday, October 3 at 7:30 pm in the Newark City Council Chambers, 37101 Newark Blvd., Newark. Six people are running for two seats on the Newark Council. Two people are running for Mayor. Please plan to attend.—Miriam Keller

NOTE:

Action Committee's materials for researching the A's project are on the Members Only web site.

—Marilyn Singer

VOTING MATTERS

The Voting Matters crew has just grown with three new leaguers taking the training at Comcast. We welcome Seham El Ansari, Alice Johnson and Carolyn Hedgecock to the motley crew. John Matthews is training to be Program Director, under the tutelage of Director John Smith. Sam Neeman is honing her graphic skills with mentor Miriam Keller. It is a fun and rewarding experience to participate in the taping of Voting Matters programs. This summer veteran Vesta Wilson returned and newcomer Ann Halligan pitched in so the program could run in spite of vacation schedules. If you might be interested in joining the crew, contact Kay Emanuele. (510-792-1645)



ACTION REPORT

Action members continue to educate themselves about the A's Project. On August 30th, we met with Keith Wolff, Jim Cunneen and Steve Lloyd to exchange information. We are asking the Board if we should put all our information on the Members Only website so everyone in the League can read our information. We will not have anything to say until the A's present their Development Proposal to the Council. (The Board voted to put the information on the Members Only site.)

The AB 537 sub-committee met with Jeff Poe at FUDTA to discuss Safe Schools and the subject of harassment. FUSD has moved this issue forward in the past year, and is working to train staff and get curriculum into the classrooms. We did not meet with Ivy Wu last year on this issue, so this may be

our next task.

Voting Matters has Mission Valley ROP running in September, and will tape a program on our 50th Anniversary to run in October. Fremont's General Plan will run in November, and Ohlone's new campus will run in December. State Initiatives will run in Jan. in time for the Feb. election.

We are preparing questions for the October 3rd Newark Candidates' Night that Voter Service is planning.

Ohlone interviews have been done with six Ohlone Board Members focusing mainly on the issue of numbered seats.

We encourage you to contact legislators and the Governor asking for the passage of SB 840, the universal health insurance bill by Sheila Kuehl.

Action Members continue to work hard at their jobs. It's quite wonderful.

—Marilyn Singer
Action Chair

IMMIGRATION FORUM

On Saturday, September 15, our League conducted a forum on "Immigration: Just the Facts" at the Fremont Library. The panel included Steven Levy, an economist; Jennifer Lee, an immigration rights clinic worker at Stanford Law School; Katherine Corcoran, a Latino affairs reporter; Larry Crider, chief of staff of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and Aarti Kohli, a legal policy associate.

This forum, an informational meeting, open to the public, was a first step toward a national (LWVUS) consensus on Immigration.

The panelists spoke in turn and then members of the audience were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Since this was our kickoff meeting, LWVFNUC committees had displays and sign-up sheets for recruitment of members.

—Vesta Wilson

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Members of the Education Committee continue to study developments in the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. Some suggestions that have been made by various entities are:

Make goals realistic. The goals that every child will read at grade level by 2014 and that all kids will graduate from high school are considered unrealistic.

Adopt National Standards. This is quite controversial. Many object to national standards. As it is now, each state sets its own standards so that states that set low standards escape penalty.

Include multiple measures. Use multiple measures for determining AYP as well as using standardized test scores.

Shift AYP from a system that labels and penalizes schools to one that rewards success.

Don't reauthorize it. Some entities recommend that the legislation be dropped.

We continue to track issues in the three school districts, study school finance, and State and national educational issues

—Vesta Wilson

HOA COMMITTEE

The Homeowners Association Committee has inspected its first HOA election. Jean Holmes, Miriam Keller, Barbara Friedrich, Vesta Wilson, all committee members and volunteer helpers Merna Morse and Ken Ballard traveled to Belmont to inspect a homeowners' election.

By California law, all homeowner association elections must be inspected by independent parties.

This is a great way to earn money for our League. The HOA paid us \$1,027 for our efforts.

—Vesta Wilson

FEDERAL IMMIGRATION POLICY: ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

By **Barbara Margerum**
Legislation

References for the following two articles can be found at www.lwvus.org

In the late 1970s, border control received growing attention after the United States terminated the U.S.-Mexico *bracero* program and implemented per-country limits on legal immigration. Following a decade of debate, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed in 1986 and greatly increased Border Patrol funding. In 1988, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) enforcement budget benefited from the War on Drugs and the Anti-Drug Abuse Act; once IRCA-related budget increases declined this was the only discretionary funding the INS received.

Beginning with the Immigration Act of 1990, legislation increasingly focused on illegal immigration and border enforcement issues. In the 1990s, the INS initiated a series of strategies designed to stop immigrants from illegally crossing the U.S. southern border – “Operation Hold the Line” in the El Paso, TX, area and “Operation Gatekeeper” in California.

Also, in the '90s several events involving immigrants and national security increased concern about illegal immigration – the bombing of the World Trade Center led by a Kuwaiti who had entered with a false Iraqi passport, the shooting at CIA headquarters by a Pakistani who had entered the U.S. illegally, and the issuance of a visa to enter the U.S. to someone whose name was on a watch list of suspected terrorists.

Signaling broad bipartisan support for aggressive border enforcement, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996. IIRIRA included provisions to “increase by not less than 1,000” the number of full-time active-duty Border Patrol agents for each of the next five years for use in areas with the most illegal crossings. IIRIRA also authorized additional barriers and funds for expansion of an existing automated fingerprint system, IDENT.

As part of IIRIRA, Congress, defining enforcement more broadly to reflect the need to cover air and land ports of entry, mandated a system for tracking entries and exits of students and foreign-born visitors be fully operational by 2003. IIRIRA also allowed local law enforcement agencies to train and deputize their officers for immigration enforcement. Eight such federal-local agreements currently exist, and 30 more agreements are in the works. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S., public and political attention on border enforcement intensified, and immigration functions were perceived as a key element of national security. Congress quickly passed legislation to address security gaps, notably the United and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (U.S.A. PATRIOT Act). Other laws focused on enacting 9/11 Commission recommendations. In short, all of the laws required greater information sharing at all levels of government and took steps to bring visa issuance and documentation requirements at home and abroad under tighter control. They also mandated the inclusion of biometric technology and tamper-resistant machine-readable entry-exit documents.

In 2003, the INS was abolished and its functions transferred into the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This change required merging employees from 22 different agencies. In 2006, Congress passed the Secure Fence Act, with the primary purpose of building 700 miles of new fencing and enhancing the technology to make the U.S.-Mexico border more secure. The cost of building the fence is estimated at \$9 billion (about \$2.5 billion more than the total budget of U.S. Customs and Border Protection in FY 2005). Questions regarding land acquisition costs and environmental impacts are still being debated

Workplace Enforcement/Employer Sanctions

The 1986 IRCA was the first legislative attempt to comprehensively address the issue of unauthorized immigration. The employer sanctions in the Act represent considerable compromise and a balance between strong enforcement at the workplace and the rights of employers and workers.

IRCA's provisions make the following activities illegal:

knowingly hiring persons not authorized to work in the U.S.;

continued employment of persons not authorized to work (those employed prior to IRCA's enactment are not subject to these restrictions); hiring individuals without verifying or correctly documenting their identity and eligibility to work legally in the U.S.

However, by any measure, employer sanctions have not been effective. Although most employers consistently and technically comply with the law by requiring necessary documentation, unauthorized immigrants with falsified identification papers are being employed in increasing numbers. The tug of war between groups demanding strict enforcement of immigration laws and labor-intensive industries with their need for a large labor pool remains unresolved.

To comply with the law, employers must maintain a record (I-9 form) demonstrating they have asked for and examined specified documents. Meanwhile, employees have the right to select the identification documents, and, unless the documents appear to be forged, employers must accept them. Employers must also verify Social Security numbers with the Social Security Administration – a process that can take months.

Thus, employers are unable to verify quickly and reliably the authenticity of workers' identity documents. While a

federal online system, Basic Pilot, is available for employer use to verify job-seekers' documents through a federal database, questioning the documents or asking for further documentation could lead to discrimination charges. The result is that roughly half of all unauthorized workers are hired by employers who fully comply with I-9 requirements. The ineffectiveness of the current system was illustrated very publicly when six Swift and Company meatpacking plants were raided by immigration agents in mid-December 2006. This highly publicized action involved more than 1,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents with warrants to search for illegal immigrants. According to Swift spokespersons, the company has participated since 1997 in the Basic Pilot federal online system. However, the company said that they have been careful not to inquire too deeply into job applicants "paper work" because in 2001 they were sued by the Justice Department for what was charged as discrimination against immigrant workers. The federal government sought \$2.5 million, but settled for \$200,000. This, according to the Justice Department, was the largest employment discrimination case based on immigration status in history.¹ As of 2006, only 3,624 employers are registered with Basic Pilot. That is less than one-twentieth of 1 per cent of the total numbers of employers in the U.S.² ICE efforts to get employers to join a new program, IMAGE, which calls for employers to voluntarily hand over all of their workers' documents, has met with skepticism and very little enrollment.

The current system has spawned a burgeoning false document industry, subverting the law's documentation requirement. In addition, according to the Migration Policy Institute, employer sanctions have not been aggressively and systematically enforced and few prosecutions of violations have been carried out successfully. Between 1991 and 2003, an average of fewer than 5,000 employer investigations were completed per year, targeting less than one-tenth of 1 percent of U.S. worksites. Only 10 percent of these cases led to final orders to fine, and an average of just \$2.2 million in fines were collected (1991-1999). Between 2000 and 2003 the number fell to fewer than 2,200 cases per year, less than 3 percent of its case activity. Only three notices of intent to fine were issued.³ In 2006, the federal government arrested 716 individuals for employing illegal immigrants compared to 25 arrested in 2002. Some argue that the cost savings from employing illegal labor can often outweigh any fine imposed on employers for non-compliance.

Total immigration enforcement spending increased fivefold between 1985 and 2002 – from \$1 billion to almost \$5 billion. During this period, the southwest border consistently received the largest share of that funding, with interior investigations lagging far behind.⁴

Spending on interior investigations increasingly lagged behind spending on border enforcement and detentions during the 1990s. After the 9/11 attacks, the INS shifted its focus to terror prevention. Less than 10 percent of immigration enforcement spending was dedicated to interior investigations of any kind in 2002, and only 2 percent of these interior investigations targeted employers. This shift in focus was formalized in 2003 when responsibility for interior investigations passed to the ICE division within the DHS.

Since the DHS took over most of the immigration duties, funding increases have largely gone to border enforcement, the only component of immigration funding that consistently wins bipartisan political support. While most agree that a serious overhaul of the system is needed, the problem is compounded by the huge number of unauthorized immigrant workers currently employed. Many argue that elimination of this significant portion of the workforce could seriously impact this country's economy.

Border Enforcement

Construction of San Diego's triple fencing in 1993-94 resulted in a drop of undocumented immigrant apprehensions in that sector from 450,152 in FY 1994 to 100,000 in FY 2002.⁵ However, during the same period, Tucson sector's apprehensions soared 342 percent, making the Tucson sector the most popular crossing point for migrants along the entire border. See Figure 1, Manning the Border. **Figure 1**



Border Patrol funding and staffing increases between 1986 and 1990 grew by 40 percent, and the focus on drug enforcement helped supplement the INS enforcement budget once the IRCA budget increases declined. In the two decades since passage of IRCA, the Border Patrol's budget has grown more than 500 percent and its personnel over 200 percent. Despite these increases, it is estimated that 10.3 million unauthorized immigrants now live in the United States, with annual inflows averaging well over half a million a year and perhaps as high as 600,000-700,000 per year.⁶

For many years, the Border Patrol has persuaded hundreds of thousands of undocumented Mexican citizens caught crossing the border to return voluntarily to Mexico. But the majority of non-Mexican immigrants also caught crossing the boarder are released and ordered to appear in court at a future date – a practice known as “catch and release.” According to a report in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, the detention system has been taxed by a rising number of border crossers from countries other than Mexico. The number of non-Mexicans caught by the Border Patrol has more than doubled in one year from FY 2004 to FY 2005.⁷ Immigration officials maintain that if they do not release most non-Mexican immigrants with a notice to appear in court, the only alternative is to detain tens of thousands of them in a time-consuming deportation process - a difficult process compounded by a drastic shortage of detention space. However, “Catch and release” is not particularly effective; as the chart below indicates, few show up in court. See Figure 2, Catch and Release.

Figure 2

Catch and release

The majority of non-Mexican immigrants caught trying to enter the United States illegally are released and given a notice to appear in court because there isn't room to hold them. Few of those who are released show up in court.

Fiscal year 2005 (Oct. 1, 2004 to Sept. 30, 2005)

Sector (state)	Non-Mexican apprehensions	Released for lack of bed space	Percentage released for lack of bed space
San Diego	1,961	272	14%
El Centro	952	134	14%
Yuma (Ariz.)	1,670	73	4%
Tucson (Ariz.)	12,665	460	4%
El Paso (Texas)	4,899	2,807	57%
Marfa (Texas)	968	400	41%
Del Rio (Texas)	31,235	27,730	89%
Laredo (Texas)	20,790	7,315	35%
McAllen (Texas)	79,859	71,663	90%

SOURCE: U.S. Customs and Border Protection

SHAFFER GRUBB / Union-Tribune

Undocumented immigrants face increased dangers and costs in order to cross the border, which means that those who used to go back and forth across the border, now stay longer. Fencing and increased Border Patrol activity may be keeping more unauthorized immigrants in the country than keeping them out. That fact, plus an undiminished flow across the border, has resulted in a rising undocumented population in the U.S. See Figure 3, Percentage of Immigrants Returning to Mexico Within One Year, 1992-2000.⁸



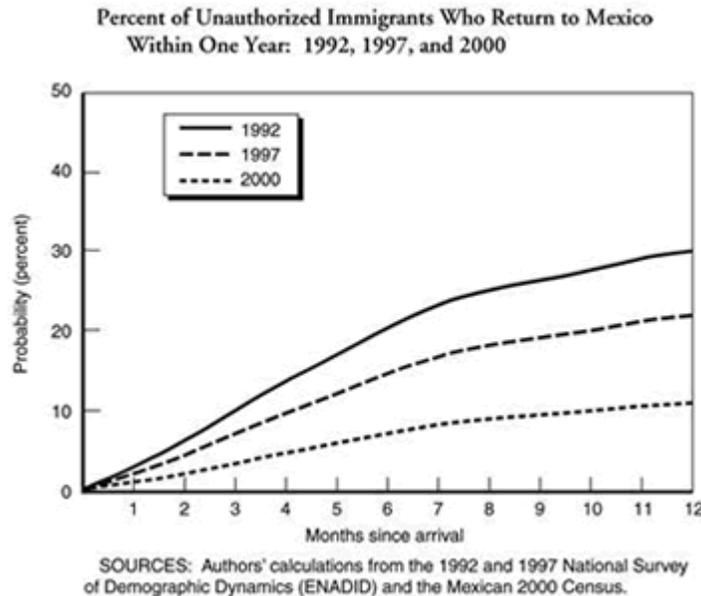


Figure 3. Percentage of Immigrants Returning to Mexico Within One Year 1992-2002

The increase in border enforcement has resulted in higher deaths rates for immigrants attempting to cross the border. See Figure 4, Reported Migrant Deaths.⁹

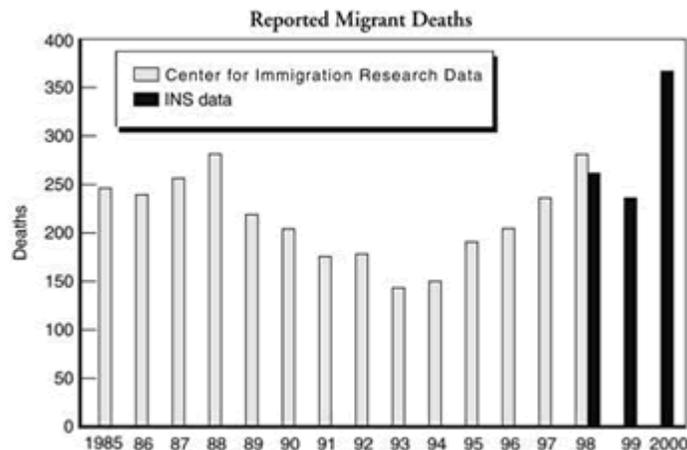


Figure 4. Reported Migrant Deaths

Increased Border Patrol staffing/funding on the U.S.-Mexico border and the increased probability of apprehension has made the smuggler (coyote) a powerful and increasingly costly alternative for illegal immigrants trying to enter the U.S.

Visas and Entry-Exit Monitoring

A significant proportion of the unauthorized population enters the country legally, but then they overstay their visas and become illegal. Because several of the 9/11 terrorists were in the country with expired visas, tracking visitors has become increasingly important. According to a *New York Times* article about a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, nearly 30 percent of all illegal immigrants are believed to have overstayed their visas. DHS officials concede that they lack the funding and technology to meet their deadline to have exit-monitoring systems at the 50 busiest crossings by December 2007; this means that officials will continue to be unable to track exits. The GAO also announced that the screening technology called for in the 1996 legislation, known as US-VISIT, has proven prohibitively expensive and would take five to ten years to develop. In January 2004, domestic security officials began fingerprint screening of arriving visitors. They have screened more than 64 million travelers and prevented more than 1,300 criminals and immigration violators from entering. But, as the *New York Times* reports, the efforts to determine whether visitors leave have faltered.¹⁰

Conclusion

Despite a 500 percent growth in the Border Patrol's budget since the passage of IRCA more than 20 years ago, border control improvements have been sporadic at best. A significant body of scholarly work concludes that border control has not been successful.¹¹ In addition, a Migration Policy Institute publication states that, "one of the primary problems is the lack of metrics to measure such deterrence."¹²

The GAO (then the General Accounting Office) issued a report one month prior to the 9/11 attacks noting that "the extent to which INS's border control efforts may have affected overall illegal entry along the Southwest border remains unclear".¹³

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF AUTHORIZED AND UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRATION

By Dorrit Marks

Over the years U.S. economic growth has accommodated an expanding labor supply that includes 1.5 million immigrants per year whose spending on homes and consumer goods has stimulated the economy and increased the demand for still more labor. Economists expect this demand to create millions of new jobs in the future at the same time that the workforce is decreasing as a result of declining fertility rates among the native-born and retiring baby boomers. Many see new immigrants as a necessary labor source to meet these increased needs.¹

Effect on American Workers and Their Wages

Do immigrants hurt the economic prospects of American workers? Do they lower wages?

The effect of immigrants on the economic prospects of American workers is an important factor in the national debate on immigration. George Borjas, a Cuban immigrant and pre-eminent scholar in immigration research at Harvard University, believes that more job seekers from abroad result in fewer opportunities and lower wages for Americans. Borjas says that poorly educated Mexicans hurt the economic prospects of poorer Americans, especially African Americans.²

Borjas's research divides workers by education and work experience, and compares immigrants to natives in each category. His research indicates that between the years 1980-2000 immigrants were the cause of about a 3 percent reduction in wages. Furthermore, wages for high school drop-outs were reduced by about 8 percent.

David Card, immigration researcher and economist at the University of California, Berkeley, presents research results to counter Borjas' arguments. Card compares wage trends in cities with large immigrant populations to cities having few immigrants and finds very little wage difference.³

In addition, Card studied the impact of the 1980 Mariel boatlift. In that year, 125,000 Cubans came to Miami, adding to the city's already sizeable Cuban immigrant population. He compared wages in Miami with those in a 'control group' of cities, Tampa, Atlanta, Houston and Los Angeles, and found that by 1985 black unemployment in Miami was lower than it had been in 1979, while unemployment in the control cities remained higher during that same period. Based on this research, Card concludes that Mariel immigrants had almost no effect on wages or on unemployment rates of less-skilled workers in Miami.⁴ The relationship between immigration and wages is not clear cut because it can't be reduced to a simple one-to-one relationship. Wages depend on the supply of capital creating new jobs as well as the supply of labor. A greater supply of immigrant workers and the resultant cheaper cost of labor increases the return to employers. They then could build new factories or open additional service facilities, ultimately creating an increased demand for workers. An article in *The Economist* concludes that neither of these studies is decisive, but "taken together they suggest that immigration, in the long run, has had only a small negative effect on the pay of America's least skilled and even that is arguable."⁵

Cost and Benefits

In North Carolina, a state with a fast-growing immigrant population, immigrants contribute more to economic growth than to the cost of public services. Over the past decade, foreign workers filled one-third of new jobs in North Carolina and cost the state much less than their contribution to the economy. A comparison of the cost of supplying public services to immigrants with the income from their taxes resulted in a net cost to the state of \$61 million. This is miniscule, however, compared to the immigrants' sizeable overall \$11 billion contribution to economic expansion in the state.

Over the past decade, immigrants filled more than half of all new jobs across the U.S., even more in some parts of the country—two-thirds in the Midwest and Southwest. On average, the additional tax burden per native household is no more than a couple of hundred dollars a year. However, the tax burden caused by immigrants can be large where the proportion of immigrants to the total population is exceptionally high. For example, in California the tax burden in the mid-1990s was \$1,178 per native-born household, the highest in the nation.⁶

The effect of authorized and unauthorized immigrants on public-sector budgets is small. Immigrant workers pay into social insurance programs, lessening strains on social assistance for the elderly. Many unauthorized workers use false ID numbers and pay Social Security taxes but are not eligible to receive benefits. Fewer than 3 percent of immigrants receive food stamps. Unauthorized workers support local

school districts, indirectly as rent payers or directly as homeowners through property taxes. They are a financial burden for hospitals and jails, but this is applicable to all low income, uninsured populations as a whole – unauthorized, authorized, and native-born.⁷

Fiscal Pressure on State and Local Budgets

1996 Welfare reform restricted immigrant access to many public benefits, such as, Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and federal food stamps. Immigrants (authorized or unauthorized) are not barred from public education, the largest public expenditure item. Net fiscal transfer from natives to immigrants at the national level is small, albeit higher in certain states that have both generous welfare benefits and large immigrant populations.⁸

An interesting case study measures the costs of immigrants in New York against their fiscal contributions. Tax contributions of legal immigrants in New York State differ substantially from those of unauthorized immigrants, an average of \$6,300 vs. \$2,400. Unauthorized immigrants pay a relatively smaller share of their income in taxes (15 percent) partly because their lower income places them in a lower federal tax bracket. Average annual income differs as well. Legal permanent resident aliens earn an average of \$18,700; refugees, \$8,300; and unauthorized immigrants, \$12,000. A large part of their tax payments go to the federal government; yet public education, the most expensive public service, is paid for at local and state levels.⁹

A recent report issued by the Texas State Comptroller estimates that the 1.4 million unauthorized immigrants in Texas are improving the Texas economy by \$17.7 billion a year, but this is unevenly divided between state and local communities. State costs are \$1.15 billion and contributions in the form of state taxes and revenues are \$1.58 billion, yielding the state a net profit of \$430 million. On the other hand, local costs are \$1.44 billion and contributions are only \$513 million, resulting in a considerable loss to cities and counties. The complete report is at <http://www.window.state.tx.us/>

Cited studies and reports indicate that costs and benefits are not evenly allocated. Taxes paid to the federal government and added productivity of the macro economy make immigration a net benefit to the country as a whole. But, at the local level, communities face demands for costly services from immigrants, particularly in education and health care, that are not offset by tax income.¹⁰

The Influx of Unauthorized, Less Skilled Labor

Nationwide attention focuses on immigration largely because of the growing number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. – an estimated 10 to 12 million persons, making up nearly one-third of the foreign-born population, with a growth rate of approximately 500,000 per year. The influx of unauthorized immigrants is primarily a response to laws of supply and demand. The number of authorized immigrants cannot meet the demand for labor. Filling workforce openings, many of which are year-round, permanent jobs has proven more powerful than immigration enforcement. To a lesser degree, unauthorized immigration is also a response to the difficulty and time delays associated with immigrating legally.¹¹

On the whole, immigrants are young, mobile, hard workers who, for a variety of reasons, are willing to work at jobs shunned by native-born workers. According to Jacoby, the addition of more low-skilled immigrant construction workers results in greater demand and higher wages for skilled construction workers such as plumbers, electricians and architects. Immigrant workers tend to raise wages rather than lower them because they tend to complement rather than compete with most native-born workers.¹²

The CEO of the National Association of Home Builders estimates 25 to 30 percent of construction workers are immigrants (authorized and unauthorized). Removing these immigrants from the workforce would produce a serious negative impact. Construction costs would rise, causing a decreased demand for new housing.¹³

Andrew Sum, director of labor studies at Northeastern University, Boston, argues that the large supply of immigrants has displaced low-skilled, native-born workers, particularly the young and poor, from jobs. He does concede that unauthorized immigrants have had a positive effect on the country's economy and have helped improve productivity of highly skilled workers. "Without the immigrants, we would have a decline in labor force of 3 to 4 percent. We couldn't have grown nearly as much as we did in the '90s if we didn't have immigrants. Still, he argues, "...we've ignored that illegal immigration has put a lot of young adults into economic jeopardy."¹⁴

Mexican Workers

During the 1990s, the U.S. workforce absorbed 2.9 million Mexican workers. At the same time, the unemployment rate fell from 6.3 percent to 3.9 percent. This influx of Mexicans gave American employers access to needed workers in a tight labor market. Owners and managers of factories, restaurants, hotels, construction firms, hospitals, orchards and innumerable other places of employment express a need for continued access to immigrant workers, mostly from Mexico. Although many Mexican immigrants lack formal education, they have skills compatible with available jobs. For instance, it is estimated that by 2010 nearly 43 percent of all job openings will require only minimal education. At the same time, native-born Americans are obtaining college degrees in record numbers and are unlikely to accept positions requiring just minimal education.¹⁵

Other researchers disagree and find that the large influx of immigrants from Mexico has adversely affected the wages of less-educated native-born workers and improved the earnings of college graduates. Low Mexican wages, in turn, helped lower prices of non-traded goods and services. Largely due to lower levels of education, the economic performance of Mexican immigrants lags considerably behind other immigrant groups and native-born workers. Non-Mexican immigrants' earnings begin to converge with that of native-born workers as they accumulate work experience, but the correlation is weaker for Mexican immigrants.¹⁶

High-Skilled Immigrants

Immigrants make a large contribution in high-skilled occupations in the U.S. There is increasing global competition for skilled professionals as well as competition to attract foreign students to graduate studies. Skilled foreign-born persons make up an ever-increasing portion of the skilled workforce in the United States - 8 percent of 25-year-old or older skilled persons in the U.S. in 1990, 13 percent in 2000, and 15 percent in 2004.

The steady supply of skilled immigrants is important for the U.S. economy because these immigrants bring skills that are in short supply in this country. They raise productivity and, with their demand for goods and services, they help create additional jobs for the native-born. More than half of U.S. Nobel prize winners are foreign-born and have made exceptional contributions in the fields of science and engineering. In California's Silicon Valley, 29 percent of technology firms were started and run by Chinese or Indians between 1995 and 1998.¹⁷

Immigrants have had a profound impact on company creation, economic innovation and market value in the United States. Over the past 15 years, immigrants have founded one of every four (25 percent) U.S. public companies that received venture capital. Forty-seven percent of current venture-backed companies in the U.S. have immigrant founders. Nearly half of immigrant entrepreneurs in the survey came to the U.S. as students and started their own businesses within 12 years of entering the country.¹⁸ Borjas finds that foreign students receiving PhDs can adversely affect the earnings of native-born students earning doctorates in the same field by 3 percent. On the other hand, Madeline Zavodny found the inflow of high-skilled professionals did not depress wages of other technology workers. Another study by Jeanne Batalova concludes that having a larger number of immigrants in the same job results in higher earnings for skilled men and women, but notes that there is a tipping point beyond which additional immigrant workers result in a decline in earnings for all workers.¹⁹

Looking Forward

Demographers expect to see increasing numbers of authorized and unauthorized immigrants coming to the U.S. in future years. New arrivals, mostly from Latin America and Asia, will spend money in the U.S. and increase earnings for businesses such as discount retailers, apartment building owners and home builders.²⁰ In addition many experts believe that young, tax-paying immigrants will help meet increasing labor needs resulting from a growing economy and a declining native-born workforce.²¹ Productive immigration discussions must include the impact of immigrants on the country's economy – their contributions as well as the costs.

Dorrit Marks, LWV of Miami-Dade County, FL, is a member of the Immigration Study Committee.

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The League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark, and Union City, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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CORRECTION

Marilyn Singer's name and position were inadvertently left out of the September Voter. My apologies to Marilyn.

____ Editor

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Watch Syeda Yunus interview Phyllis Merrifield, Miriam Keller and Sandy Pantages . Topic: 50th Anniversary Celebration.

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Union City, Channel 15, every Thursday at 9:30 PM

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CALENDAR

Tue., Oct. 2	HOA Election Committee	9:30 AM	Jean Holmes' home
Sat., Oct 6	HOA Election	9:00 AM	Southwyck HOA
Thurs., Oct. 11	LWVFNUC Board Meeting	7:15 PM	Syeda Yunus' home
Fri., Oct. 12	Education Committee	9:30 AM	Miriam Keller's home
Wed., Oct. 17	Cable Tapint	2:00 PM	Comcast Studios
Thurs., Oct 26	Action Committee (brown bag lunch)	12:30 PM	Marilyn Singer's home
Sat., Oct. 27	50th Anniversary Gala	6:00 PM: no host bar 7:00 PM: Dinner	Flamingo Palace

CELEBRATE OUR 50th!!
October 27

