

FORMULATING IMMIGRATION POLICY IN A TIME OF REFORM: A PLAN FOR THE COMPENSATED REPATRIATION OF ILLEGAL ALIENS

**An NPG Forum Paper
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A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY TO REFORM IMMIGRATION POLICY

Until 2016, a seemingly insurmountable coalition of interests groups had blocked any serious consideration of the prevailing system of high legal immigration and *de facto* toleration of illegal immigration. Democratic politicians were increasingly captivated by the vision of an immigration-propelled emerging majority, in which an influx of some 100 million people (80% of them low-skilled immigrants) would drive the population to over 400 million by the middle of the century. Once the illegal aliens¹ – who are concentrated near the bottom of the economic pyramid and isolated from the cultural mainstream – were on a path to citizenship, they would be collecting government benefits, binding them permanently to the Democrats.

Republican voters and legislators should have been expected to recoil at the prospect of a displacement of the native population and a surge in clients for the welfare state, stemming in large part from a collapse in law enforcement. Indeed, during the past 15 years the Congress, led by Republicans, beat back three heavily-lobbied attempts at legalizing the open border through amnesty. Resistance was kept within limits, however, by corporate donors – who were convinced that their best interests lay in rising population and low wages.

The self-imposed silence on immigration in political discourse ended abruptly last year, when the two candidates favoring a tough stance – Trump and Cruz – swept the Republican primaries by wide margins. After winning the presidency, Donald Trump has issued executive orders that strengthen enforcement of present immigration laws while legislation to reduce and rationalize legal immigration has been introduced in the Congress. Contrary to all expectations, therefore, the country is embarking on a major reconsideration of its immigration system.

The outcome of this reconsideration is far from certain. Reformers², previously excluded from policy circles now face the dilemma of exercising power. The electorate understands that the reformers hold just enough power to be accountable for the exercise of that power. Consequently, in a relatively brief time, the public will expect those in power to put forth a coherent plan to revamp the system, to persuade the public of

the wisdom of that plan, and to present some concrete results to the voters. Meanwhile, the same coalition that produced the open border has a big stake in making the reform fail.

For those who are concerned about achieving a sustainable population, coherent immigration reform is crucial. According to Census Bureau projections, the population of the United States will grow by almost one third between 2014 and 2060. Some 64 million will be directly due to international migration. An additional 40 million will be due to births by foreign-born mothers. The choice could not be simpler: if we achieve low net immigration, population will stabilize and begin a gradual decline; conversely, if population is allowed to grow in line with recent trends, we will add over 100 million people.³

Although the task facing reformers is to overhaul the entire immigration regime, illegal immigration has a strategic importance at this juncture, partly because open borders advocates and their media sympathizers see this as an issue that can be used to discredit the entire concept of immigration reform. Defenders of the open border would like to reduce the issue to one of compassion for the illegal aliens who, with their humble economic condition and vulnerability, are natural subjects for media coverage. Attempts to enforce the law are characterized as “conducting midnight raids,” “herding innocent people into boxcars,” or “separating families.” The objective is to cast the conflict as The Good and Compassionate versus The Others – who have only the darkest of motives. In fact, such tactics amount to a refusal to discuss the issue or to debate alternatives, since it is not possible to bargain with absolute evil.

In this environment, reformers must confront two challenges fairly soon: 1) to formulate coherent plans to deal with the estimated 12 million individuals who are currently residing in the U.S. illegally; and 2) to persuade the broad electorate of the justification for any proposed solution. As a contribution to this debate – and eventually to a change in policy – this Forum paper proposes a plan to encourage the departure of illegal aliens through cash payments, hereafter referred to as Compensated Repatriation. This plan would be most effective when used in conjunction with a policy of attrition through enforcement.

One objective of proposing Compensated Repatriation is to move the debate from mutual recriminations (compassion versus respect for the law) toward rational consideration of possible solutions. The proposal for Compensated Repatriation in effect says: “We recognize some valid points about the abject condition of illegal aliens, and are willing to make some accommodations. You should also be willing to address the concerns that we raise. Here is our solution, which we believe is effective and humane. Please tell us how you would do it differently.”

Compensated Repatriation also poses a viable solution which works towards NPG’s ultimate mission, and what should certainly be a primary goal for all Americans: to slow, halt, and eventually reverse U.S. population growth. If we are ever to preserve a livable future – which includes a sustainable environment, economy, and standard of living – we must greatly reduce the U.S. population. Once again, the proposal works to encourage sensible deliberation of potential solutions – it inspires an open dialogue on a critical issue, rather than fostering a continued clash of opposing views.

URGENTLY NEEDED: TRANSPARENCY ABOUT THE BURDENS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

The argument for Compensated Repatriation starts with the following premise: the long-standing refusal of politicians and the mainstream media to discuss the costs of economic illegal immigration has to end. It is self-evident that democratic governance functions best when there is transparency in public policy. Legislators and voters should have access to the best information disclosing the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action. The aversion to discussing the cost of illegal immigration has been widespread among a substantial part of elite opinion which has seemingly decided that the “goodness” of open borders is self-evident, settled for all time and beyond rational discussion. For example, during the debate over the Gang of Eight proposal in 2013, minimal discussion took place in the Congress about costs – even though the proposed measures were so huge as to affect every American household for the foreseeable future.⁴ Likewise, the media show virtually no interest in the topic.

The stark reality is that current practices attract immigrants – both legal and illegal – with much lower levels of skill and education than natives, placing a huge burden on American taxpayers. Illegal aliens are typically clustered on the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder. These facts are not in dispute. Immigrant advocates and the pro-immigrant media present a consistent picture of persons with low education, holding menial jobs with inadequate social insurance, culturally isolated from the native population and often preyed upon by unscrupulous employers and criminal gangs.

Data from sources that are generally favorable to illegal aliens confirm the basic accuracy of this picture. To take

one example, according to the Pew Hispanic Center (2009), among illegal aliens age 25-64, 47% had less than a high school education – compared to 8% of U.S.-born residents. The 2007 median household income of unlawful migrants was \$36,000 – about 40% below that of U.S.-born residents. In contrast to legal immigrants, illegal aliens have not statistically attained markedly higher incomes the longer they live in the United States. One third of the children of illegal aliens, and one fifth of adult unlawful migrants, live in poverty – nearly double the poverty rate for children of U.S.-born parents (18%) or for U.S.-born adults (10%).⁵

While the disadvantaged situation of illegal aliens may warrant some consideration in addressing the problem, the fact remains that unlawful immigration creates a heavy financial burden for taxpayers. Owing to their low skill and education levels – and resulting low-paying jobs, illegal aliens pay little in taxes and are typically heavy net users of welfare. According to estimates by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), expenditures attributable to illegal immigration cost U.S. taxpayers about \$113 billion a year at the federal, state, and local levels.⁶ By way of comparison, national defense outlays amount to some \$600 billion. Most of the costs (\$84 billion) fall on state and local governments, mainly for education. At the federal level, about 1/3 of outlays are matched by tax collections from illegal aliens.

A large share of illegal aliens pays no income taxes. Among those who do, some of the revenue collected is often refunded to them via the Earned Income Tax Credit and Additional Child Credit. At the state and local level, an average of less than 5% of the public costs associated with illegal immigration is recouped through taxes.

Richwine estimates that each low-income immigrant household of four costs U.S. taxpayers \$20,000 per year. The annual net expenditures (outlays less tax revenues) that illegal aliens cost U.S. taxpayers is nearly \$1,000 per native household. (The average American household pays about \$14,000 in taxes at all levels per year.) It will be shown below that the cost of continuing to allow that illegal aliens to remain, let alone granting amnesty or “pathways to citizenship” are truly enormous when projected into the future. Meanwhile, a seemingly-endless flood of cheap immigrant labor for big business – and an increasing number of potential votes for politicians – has created significant incentive for each group to turn a blind eye to the illegal immigration issue. But the rising number of available illegal aliens has meant adverse impacts for low-skilled natives. (For more on this, see the 2016 NPG Forum paper *The Negative Economic Impact of Immigration on American Workers*, authored by Edwin S. Rubenstein.) Those defending policies of allowing illegals to remain or proving them with expanded benefits should be required to justify imposing a financial burden of this magnitude on the American people.

In addition to its burden on taxpayers, illegal immigration contributes to a general degradation of the rule of law. First

of all, the very fact that millions of people remain in the country in violation of the law – many of them working and even receiving public benefits – means that in many important ways the rule of law has been suspended by common consent. In order to enter the country and gain access to employment or social benefits, many illegal aliens become engaged with criminal or human trafficking networks who extract payment for protection from enforcement and providing forged documents. In order for the unlawful system to operate, both government officials and employer groupings have acquiesced in the suspension of enforcement of laws against hiring illegal aliens.

The fact that an individual is now in the country illegally, or that an individual is poor or vulnerable, does not constitute justification for allowing that individual to remain, although it may be a reason to be considerate in applying measures to re-establish the rule of law. Indeed, the presumption should be that anyone in the country illegally should be required to leave.

The major religions professed by Americans, as well as the civic values of the American Republic, postulate that all persons are worthy of equal moral consideration, all have inalienable rights, and all should be equal before the law. Beyond this, it has been increasingly part of the American cultural consensus that society should show care for the economically- and socially-disadvantaged. This being said, there is no accepted principle that Americans are obliged to extend an open invitation to all would-be migrants to come, to compete with native workers, and to enjoy the full benefits of U.S. residency, let alone to receive subsidies on the scale discussed in this paper. This would appear to be the assumption of open-border advocates – although none has said so explicitly. Rather, the consensus among citizens appears to be that through neglect of enforcement we now have a significantly large population of illegal aliens who are economically vulnerable, receive a significant amount of social benefits, and cannot pay sufficiently for the social benefits they receive. These being the apparent facts about illegal immigration in the U.S., the next rational step is to correct this situation.

ENFORCEMENT FIRST

During the recent campaign, all Presidential aspirants pledged to secure the border. With the exceptions of Trump and Cruz, all Republicans were evasive on how to deal with the illegal aliens already in the country, while Democrats favored amnesty with a “path to citizenship.”

All Republican candidates agreed that the first step is to rescind the actions of the Obama Administration, which – having inherited a legacy of weak enforcement – weakened it further. The second step would be to enact a widely agreed upon set of policies, covering both illegal entry and unlawful visa overstays, such as biometric tracking and E-Verify. Some companies already voluntarily use E-Verify to authenticate the immigration status of job applicants, but it could easily be

made mandatory with low budget outlays using our present technical capability.⁷

Implementation of these basic measures would mean that a strategy of “attrition through enforcement” is in place.⁸ There need not be any publicized effort to identify, apprehend or deport illegal aliens other than those who are apprehended through normal channels. Illegal aliens would be unable to secure employment, and would eventually land on a track ending in deportation. Faced with these prospects, as Mitt Romney put it, they will likely “self deport.”

COMPENSATED REPATRIATION

Compensated Repatriation, which provides positive incentives for illegal aliens to leave the U.S., is the logical extension of attrition through enforcement. After the enactment of Compensated Repatriation, the President or a cabinet secretary announce that – for a limited time – those who are in the country illegally may apply to be compensated for their voluntary departure. When the program terminates, those still in the country illegally will face standard enforcement proceedings ending in deportation without compensation.

Every illegal alien who was in the country prior to the stipulated date, had not been convicted of a crime, and was not facing legal proceedings on the accusation of a crime would be eligible for the cash indemnity. In exchange for payment, each illegal alien would: 1) agree to leave the country, 2) submit to biometric identification, and 3) provide a written admission that he/she had violated U.S. immigration laws, acknowledging that unauthorized return would constitute a felony with severe penalties. The vetting process would include a check of records to verify that the individual was not facing criminal charges, and that he/she was in the country prior to the date stipulated for eligibility.

The indemnity would consist of:

- 1) Transportation to the individual’s place of origin;
- 2) A payment of no less than \$13,200 per adult and \$1,000 per dependent child; and
- 3) A resettlement allowance of \$1,000 per adult.

The Pew Center estimates that America’s illegal alien population consists of approximately 6 million men, 4 million women, and 1.5 million children – as well as 4 million children born in the United States whose parents are illegal aliens. If they were to leave the U.S. voluntarily, all of these individuals would be eligible for the indemnity if they met stipulated conditions. Under present interpretation of the 14th Amendment, the U.S.-born children of illegal aliens are entitled to citizenship – but having a child who is a citizen does not entitle illegal aliens to remain. Prior to departure, the eligibility of minor children for citizenship must be determined. Like any other citizens, dependent children who are U.S. citizens would keep their right to remain in the country without their parents – or to return at a later time.

They would be issued a document certifying their citizenship with biometric identification.

Conceptually, the payment for departure can be viewed as a return of the employer and employee contributions to social security and Medicare for five years at the minimum wage. The justification for this payment is that the person in question contributed for benefits that he/she will never collect. This amount will be granted without verification as long as the applicant otherwise qualifies for Compensated Repatriation. Furthermore, the sum proposed is fairly close to the figure of \$12,500 cited by the DHS as the cost of apprehending and removing each illegal alien.⁹

To speed the departure process, the proposed compensation amount would be granted without verification of these assumed Social Security or Medicare contributions – as long as the applicant otherwise qualifies for Compensated Repatriation. However, the indemnity can be increased if the individual can provide proof that their actual contributions have been higher. For example, the person may have been in the country 10 years, working at more than the minimum wage with additional contributions to a company pension plan. Applicants requesting more than the minimum benefit amount must document the higher level of contributions, and must also submit proof that no document fraud was used in obtaining work.

It is reasonable to assume that a very large share of illegal aliens – probably a clear majority – would voluntarily accept the offer, especially if enforcement is strict and the obvious alternative is deportation. But even the financial incentive alone would be sufficient for many, considering that most illegal aliens work at very low-paying jobs with poor prospects for advancement. Many also came with the idea of saving enough money to return home, but given the grim realities of life as an illegal worker they cannot save sufficiently.¹⁰

These indemnity payments could enable beneficiaries to make a fresh start in their home countries. A family of two adults and two children would leave with cash in hand of \$30,400. This would equal three years' average per capita income in Mexico, almost nine years' income in Guatemala, almost 13 years' in Honduras, and 17 years' in Haiti.

COSTS OF RESOLVING THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL ALIENS

Inasmuch as the Compensated Repatriation program inevitably involves sizable expenditures, the costs of this policy should be compared to those of other options. Broadly speaking, the options are:

- 1) To continue the present system, whereby illegal aliens remain here in violation of the law with significant but limited social benefits;
- 2) To grant them amnesty with increased social benefits; or
- 3) To take some measures to induce them to leave either by:

- a. Enforcement only, or
- b. Compensated Repatriation plus Enforcement.

Estimates of the costs of possible solutions for the problem of illegal immigration are summarized in the Table. The cost of allowing illegal aliens to remain is equal to net social expenditure (welfare costs) on illegal aliens for as long as they are in the country. The total cost of any program aimed at their departure has two components: 1) the costs of executing the program (program costs), and 2) welfare costs, meaning social expenditure for the illegal aliens until they depart.

As a starting point it is useful to estimate the costs of the present system of permitting illegal aliens to remain, under which they receive limited benefits. Fortunately for analysts, the costs of the present immigration regime were estimated by Jason Richwine and Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation (2013) – but their findings have been largely ignored.¹¹ Richwine and Rector estimated the social expenditures on illegal aliens less their payments of taxes, and arrived at a total deficit of \$50 billion annually in constant 2010 prices on both state and federal levels. This deficit falls mainly on states and localities where the immigrants receive large education benefits and pay negligible taxes. Thus, over five years, the cost would be \$273 billion – while *over the expected life of these individuals, the total deficit would amount to \$2.9 trillion*. To put this number in perspective, the estimated costs of all the wars of the United States since 2001 (Afghanistan, Iraq and related actions in Pakistan) was \$4.4 trillion.¹²

Richwine and Rector modified their projections to simulate what would happen under the Gang of Eight amnesty, which would have given migrants full access to social benefits in stages. For 13 years they would be legal residents with special status, but not yet entitled to all means-tested programs. Under the amnesty, the net expenditures on illegal aliens would have declined from \$267 billion to \$217 billion in the five years following the amnesty, as the previously-illegal aliens (now amnestied migrants) begin paying taxes but remain ineligible for many benefits. After the 13 year phase-in period, welfare costs explode as the legalized migrants collect the full package of benefits. *The total fiscal impact of the Gang of Eight amnesty would have been \$6 trillion – or 1½ times the total spending on all of the wars of the 21st century combined*. It bears repeating that those who support allowing the illegals to remain or granting them amnesty should be required to justify placing a burden of this magnitude on the American people.

Given the huge expense of maintaining the population of illegal aliens, any policy that results in their departure produces enormous savings. In the years before the 2016 election, amnesty proponents tried to discredit the practicality of attrition through enforcement by producing numbers that purportedly showed unacceptably high costs – while disingenuously neglecting to consider the cost of amnesty.

Somewhat inadvertently, these projections showed that even with the most exaggerated cost estimates, any programs that led to the departure of illegal aliens would yield enormous savings to the taxpayers.¹⁴

In sum, policies that result in the departure of illegal aliens involve immediate costs – but reduce costs in the long run by diminishing welfare expenditure. Policies that speed the departure of illegal aliens result in greater savings than those that accomplish the same goal over a longer timeframe.

The simulations in the Table make it possible to understand how this might work out in quantitative terms. In the simulation, both the Enforcement Alone approach and the Compensated Repatriation approach aim at removing all illegal aliens within 10 years. While the Enforcement Alone approach might be attempted with existing resources (i.e. simply by rescinding the Obama Administration’s orders that weakened enforcement), it is more prudent to be sure that resources are adequate to accomplish the expanded mission. Thus, in late January 2017 President Trump asked for funding to hire additional Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents, to expand detention facilities, and to expedite judicial proceedings prior to deportation. One critic of such enhanced enforcement cited estimates that these expenses will increase budget outlays by about \$20 billion per year. The same article alluded to additional expenses that would be incurred if the wall on the southern U.S. border were constructed.¹⁵

The simulation assumes incremental enforcement costs of \$30 billion annually. This figure was used because it was the highest number put forth by any analysts in attempts to argue that enforcement costs are unacceptably high.¹⁶ In reality, the costs may very well be lower. What the numbers actually show is that even using the most inflated projections available, enforcement results in a savings of 80% over that of allowing the illegal aliens to remain – and a 95% savings over amnesty.

In estimating the full potential cost of the Compensated Repatriation program (if all eligible illegal aliens were to accept the indemnity), the number of adults and children are multiplied by the amount of payments made to individuals in each category as estimated by the Pew Center.

In the most naïve scenario, if all illegal aliens accepted the Compensated Repatriation offer with current levels of enforcement, they would be gone at the end of five years. The Compensated Repatriation program would cost some \$148 billion – all of which is spent in the initial five year period. *Taxpayers would save more than \$100 billion* (i.e. \$273 billion in welfare benefits under present conditions, less the compensation payment). There is, admittedly, little possibility that the program could be entirely successful without enforcement – but to the degree it does work, it is a powerful and efficient solution. Its great attraction is that it removes large numbers of people, and does so quickly.

Instead of aiming at removing all illegal aliens within five years through Compensated Repatriation alone, let our proposed target be to remove 75% of all illegal aliens – decreasing the population to 3.3 million over five years – *using Compensated Repatriation backed by enhanced enforcement*. All illegal aliens are unlikely to accept the Compensated Repatriation offer. They may have criminal records; they may not have been in the country long enough to qualify; or they may simply refuse to leave, even with compensation. For the purposes of this discussion, let us assume that 60% of adult illegal aliens accepted the offer at a cost of \$89 million, with an additional 15% leaving due to enforcement. These figures are used in the Table.

Expenditures are divided into two five-year periods following the introduction of the new policy. Enforcement costs are assumed to be identical under both approaches in the first five-year period. However, operating under our prior assumption that most illegal aliens will have already left, in the second five-year period incremental enforcement costs will be reduced by 50% for the Compensated Repatriation approach.

Both Enforcement Alone and Compensated Repatriation require increased program expenditure over present levels, which will be only partly offset by lower welfare expenditures during the first five years. In the second five-year period, the total expenses of the Enforcement Alone approach are only slightly higher than under the present system, but the Compensated Repatriation program reduces expenses to very small amounts.

Summing up, the major conclusions regarding the costs of the principal policy options are:

- It is extremely expensive (nearly \$3 trillion over their expected lifetime) to continue the present policy of allowing illegal aliens to remain, due to their high utilization of welfare and minimal tax payments;
- It would be much more expensive to grant amnesty, which – due to their increased eligibility for welfare – would double the net expenditures to \$6 trillion;
- Attrition through Enforcement would decrease the cost by at least 80%; and
- The cost could be decreased still further with Compensated Repatriation.

A POSSIBILITY FOR SELECTIVE LEGALIZATION

Preceding sections have made a case for the use of policies aimed at the removal of all illegal aliens. One possible modification to the policy mix of enforcement and Compensated Repatriation would be to grant legal status to a limited number of illegal aliens. If structured reasonably, such a program would specify criteria for selection based

FISCAL COSTS OF POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Solution	Total Cost	Total Cost Years 1-5	Total Cost Years 6-10	Program Cost Years 1-5	Program Cost Years 6-10	Total Program Cost	Welfare Cost Years 1-5	Welfare Cost Years 6-10	Total Welfare Cost
Under Present System- a	2894	273	273	0	0	0	273	273	2894
Under Amnesty as in Gang of Eight-a	6000	217	217	0	0	0	217	217	6000
Enforcement Only-b	501	313	188	125	125	250	188	63	251
Compensated Repatriation + Enforcement-c	467	371	96	213	63	276	158	33	191

Billions of Dollars

a- *Rector and Richwine*

b- *Based upon estimates in Gitis and Collins¹³*

c- *Enforcement Costs plus \$88 billion for compensation payments in first 5 years*

upon the applicant's record and potential contribution to American society. The criteria upon which applications might be assessed might include:

- a. Honorable service in the armed forces
- b. Education and employment history
- c. Use of means-tested government programs

The basic standards in deciding who should be allowed to stay would be simple:

1. If that person applied to enter in the country now, would we be inclined to accept their request?
2. Has the individual in question made a contribution to American society that is substantial enough to override the basic fact of being present in violation of the law?

No person who uses or is likely to use means tested programs should be allowed to remain, which would mean that most current illegal aliens would be refused. If legalization is denied, the applicant automatically would be placed on the Compensated Repatriation track.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORM: THE CASE FOR FLEXIBILITY

Thus far it has been argued, mainly on economic grounds, that the government should implement a policy of

requiring the departure of illegal aliens through Compensated Repatriation. In this section it is argued that such a policy is advisable on moral and practical grounds as well.

Most people would agree that in approaching any problem, a solution combining positive incentives with compulsion, when available, should be preferred to simple compulsion. While the illegal aliens themselves are guilty of some wrongdoing, it would be easy to draw up a long list of other parties who are their accomplices. That list might include the employers who hired them, and American authorities (Presidents, governors and legislators) who failed to provide moral leadership or to enforce the law while acquiescing in hiding the issue. One can also point to "humanitarian" groups and the media, who have sentimentalized the plight of the illegal aliens and sought to de-legitimize discussion. A policy of deporting all illegal aliens unconditionally would punish only the weakest and most vulnerable participants in our thoroughly broken immigration system. The goal of the policy should be to reform that system, not to wreak vengeance on anyone.

The best way to make progress in implementing the reform is not simply to maintain majority support, which is what the reform now has, but to build support among those who are sympathetic yet still have reservations. Thus, while many Americans may accept that illegal aliens place a disproportionately large burden on our nation's taxpayers and

low-paid workers – those same Americans may also believe that many illegal aliens are indeed poor, hard-working, and vulnerable. Compensated Repatriation, particularly if accompanied by the possibility for selective legalization, could potentially expand public support for a policy of departure by demonstrating that every effort has been made to give all illegal aliens a chance to make their case – and that those who were refused did receive fair compensation.

Compensated Repatriation has the added attraction that it would place opponents of reform in a conflicted position. Under any approach that relies entirely on enforcement, opponents have incentives to resist by all means – such as expanding sanctuary cities, launching endless court challenges and encouraging illegal aliens to exhaust every legal remedy. If on the other hand, a time-bound offer of compensation is on the table, it would place a high cost on obstruction. If opponents encourage illegals to decline the offer, they risk inflicting considerable harm on the very people they purport to help.

Compensated Repatriation should be part of an overall strategy aimed at gaining control, not over just illegal immigration but all immigration, legal as well as illegal. During the 1990s, legal and illegal immigration each added 1 million persons to the population every year. Since 2007, net illegal immigration has flattened. If Compensated Repatriation is executed as suggested above, the illegal alien population would be reduced by at least 10 million and those who remain under partial legalization would be the least financially burdensome. In fact, given the high fertility of illegal aliens, the reduction in population through 2060 is likely to be on the order of 15-20 million persons – an enormous contribution to the goal of restraining population growth.¹⁷ Having dealt with that issue, Americans will be compelled to take on what is an even more substantive driver of U.S. population growth: legal immigration, which still adds 1 more than million to the population every year.

A comprehensive solution to the overall problem of immigration inevitably entails some bargaining among of the parties involved. President Trump has already stated that he accepts the possibility of allowing some illegal aliens to remain. On balance there is a strong possibility that any solution will involve allowing some to remain. The task for those advocating practical solutions is to recognize this reality, while accomplishing as many other objectives of reform as possible.

Until now, vocal opposition to the Trump Administration reformers has mainly come from left-of-center activists and politicians using the plight of illegal aliens to arouse sympathy. Reformers can potentially contain opposition from this source, especially when the arguments outlined in this Forum are used to counter their position. On the other hand, corporate interests – which are important sources of funding for the Republican Party – might pose a bigger roadblock to reform. However, there is every reason to expect that the business sector would embrace a more restrictive policy on illegal

immigration if they can receive cheap labor legally. Recently, a group of 32 U.S. Senators (21 of them Republicans) pressed for expanded use of H-2 visas for unskilled temporary workers.¹⁸ It is important for those seeking to change the system not to allow this to happen. On balance, reformers should be willing to show flexibility on illegal immigration, where a substantial reduction is achievable, in order to make sure that the overall set of policies that emerge from the reform are equal to the larger task of bringing immigration, and hence population, under control.

CONCLUSION

In all, illegal immigration comes at too high of a cost for the U.S. to continue its current policy of acquiescence and accommodation. As this Forum paper, and repeated studies over the years, have shown – the toll on our nation’s economy, environment, infrastructure, and natural resources is simply more than can be justified. If adequate enforcement measures are implemented and a program of Compensated Repatriation is enacted to encourage the voluntary departure of the current population of illegal aliens, we would accomplish three objectives:

1. A reduction *by tens of millions* in the number of illegal aliens in the country would be achieved.
2. A major step will be taken to disarm the opponents of immigration reform who have used the plight of illegal aliens to stifle debate; and
3. Reformers would be freed to focus on other aspects of immigration policy – particularly legal immigration – with the overall objective of bring total immigration, and the resulting explosive growth of population, under control.

ENDNOTES

1. Persons who are in the country unlawfully. While many other terms are used to describe this category of person, illegal alien is the term used by the Department of Justice.
2. In this Forum paper, the term “reform” means a policy aimed at ending the present regime of large-scale legal immigration and acceptance of illegal immigration. “Reformers” means those advocating such a policy.
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5. Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn. “A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States,” Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanic Trends. April 14, 2009. (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/14/a-portrait-of-unauthorized-immigrants-in-the-united-states/>)

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8. Jessica M. Vaughan, "Attrition through Enforcement: A Cost-Effective Strategy to Shrink the Illegal Population," Center for Immigration Studies, *Backgrounders*, April 2006. (<http://cis.org/Enforcement-IllegalPopulation>). Also see Kris Kobach, "Attrition through Enforcement: A Rational Approach to Illegal Immigration," *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law*, Volume 15 (2) 2008.
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