



IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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MESSAGE: release and Q&A on legal immigration numbers

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IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
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NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
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August 11, 1999

INS Announces Legal Immigration Figures for Fiscal Year 1998

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) today announced that 660,477 persons legally immigrated to the United States in Fiscal Year (FY) 1998. The major categories of immigrants were: immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, 284,270; family preferences, 191,480; employment preferences, 77,517; refugee/asylee adjustments, 54,709; and diversity program, 45,499.

INS estimates that total legal immigration would have been 450,000 – 550,000 higher during the four-year period of FY 1995 – FY 1998 were it not for the large volume of pending adjustment of status applications that has created longer wait times for immigrant approvals.

The agency's application workload nearly doubled between 1994 and 1995 when Section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act was implemented. This provision allowed illegal residents who were eligible for immigrant status to pay a penalty fee and apply with INS for adjustment of status in the United States, instead of acquiring a visa abroad from the Department of State. Application receipts continued to increase through FY 1997, and pending adjustment-of-status applications increased from 121,000 in FY 1994 to 811,000 by the end of FY 1998.

FY 1998 data indicates that 357,037 new arrivals to the United States obtained immigrant visas abroad through the Department of State, and 303,440 who were already living in the United States became legal immigrants by applying for adjustment of status with the Department of Justice.

There was little change in the demographic characteristics of legal immigrants between FY 1997 and FY 1998. As was true in FY 1997, the largest single source country for U.S. immigrants in FY 1998 was Mexico, accounting for 20 percent of all immigrants admitted for the fiscal year. As a result, North America was the largest geographic source with 38 percent, followed by 33 percent from Asia and 14 percent from Europe. The top states of intended residence for new immigrants in FY 1998 were California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey and Illinois, as has been the case since 1971. A complete report will be available on the INS Web site www.ins.usdoj.gov after August 12, 1999.

– INS –

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY**Questions & Answers: FY 98 Legal Immigration Numbers
(8/99)****1. Why is the INS late in releasing both the FY 97 and FY 98 legal immigration numbers?**

In FY 97 INS switched from the Immigration Card Facility to the four INS Service Centers to capture legal immigrant data. New programming and procedures for processing immigrant records delayed the initial receipt of data for analysis at Headquarters by approximately 2 months. Then when INS evaluated the initial data against other information ** for example, State Dept. visas ** the data seemed inaccurate. Since then INS tabulated additional data runs to ensure that the data were accurate and complete. The FY 1997 figures were released January 1999. The delayed release of the FY 97 numbers pushed back the analysis and release of the FY 98 legal immigration numbers.

2. What was the projected processing time for adjustment of status cases before and after 245(i)? What were the adjustment of status backlog and projected processing time for FY 98? What are the current adjustment of status backlog and projected processing time?

INS does not collect data on the actual time it takes to process each case, but estimates that projected processing time was approximately 4 months at the end of FY 1994 and increased to approximately 18 months by the end of FY 1997. The pending caseload at the end of FY 98 was 811,000 with an average projected processing time of about 27 months. As of June 1999 the pending caseload was 896,974 with an average projected processing time of 39 months.

3. What would the level of legal immigration have been in FY 95, FY 96, FY 97, and FY 98 if INS was current on adjustments of status?

INS estimates that total legal immigration would have been, on average, 110,000-140,000 higher each year during the 4-year period of FY 1995*FY 1998 were it not for the large volume of pending adjustment of status applications that has created longer wait times for immigrant approvals.

4. If there is no decrease in these backlogs, how will that affect legal immigration numbers beyond FY 98?

There are too many variables and unknowns to accurately predict what might happen. We do expect the number of applications for adjustment of status to decrease in the future because no new aliens may become eligible for section 245(i) adjustment after January 14, 1998.

2.

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(more)

5. What is INS doing to reduce the adjustment of status backlog?

The INS has competing adjudicative backlogs and is trying to balance and manage each of these backlogs within existing resources. The agency has received additional staff resources to help reduce the naturalization backlog, which as of June 1999 is approximately 1.7 million applications. However, as INS reduces the naturalization backlog, the agency will be moving those resources to enhance the processing of adjustment of status applications.

6. If INS gets current on the backlog, what impact, if any, will that have on future immigration levels?

The immigration level will be higher than it would have been otherwise for several years as INS reduces the backlog.

7. How does INS explain the downward trend in legal immigration numbers since FY 1996?

INS' legal immigration numbers do not reflect the demand to immigrate. They indicate the number of individuals who were processed and were granted legal permanent resident status during a particular fiscal year. Due to the unprecedented backlog of adjustment of status applications during the past four-year period (FY 1995 - FY 1998), it is impossible to determine whether the trend in the demand to immigrate to the United States has either increased or decreased during the past four years.

**** INS ****

Immigrants embracing, enriching United States

Contrary to the fears expressed by James Edwards Jr. in his July 5 commentary, "Motto put to the test," today's newcomers, like earlier immigrants, are integrating successfully into society. Contemporary immigrant families are doing what newcomers always have done. They are slowly, but assuredly, embracing the cultural norms that are part of life in the United States.

The choice for immigrants is not and has never been between diversity and unity. Since the founding of this country, people of different racial, religious and cultural backgrounds have maintained their specific identities while adhering to the notion that they are part of an overall American family. Immigrants, like most Americans, celebrate diversity and embrace unity.

It is high time the myths and misconceptions perpetuated by Mr. Edwards gave way to facts and figures. In a study released last week, Pepperdine University research scholar Gregory Rodriguez used census data to examine four quantifiable indexes of immigrant assimilation and found the following:

■ **Citizenship** — The longer immigrants reside in the United States, the more likely they are to become U.S. citizens. In 1990, more than three-fourths (76.4 percent) of immigrants who had resided in the United States for 40 years were naturalized.

■ **Homeownership** — Immigrants are making significant strides toward homeownership. Within 20 years of arrival in the United States, more than six out of 10 (60.9 percent) owned their own homes in 1990. In 13 of the 15 most populous immigrant groups, two-thirds of households were living in owner-occupied homes after 26 years of residence in the United States.

■ **English language acquisition** — Within 10 years of arrival, a little more than three-quarters (76.3 percent) of immigrants spoke English with high proficiency. With second and third generations, virtually all children of immigrants spoke English proficiently. In most cases, the native language of immigrants is lost after a few generations in the United States.

■ **Intermarriage** — Both foreign-born Asians and foreign-born His-

panics have higher rates of intermarriage than do U.S.-born whites and blacks. By the third generation, intermarriage rates for Asians and Latinos are extremely high. Fully one-third (33.2 percent) of third-generation Hispanic women are married to non-Hispanics and 41 percent of third-generation Asian-American women have non-Asian husbands.

Far from being at odds with the national interest, current immigrants prove that this nation of immigrants is strong enough to absorb people of different backgrounds within its borders. Once accepted into the American landscape, immigrants bring in their own customs, which become part of America. Immigrants enrich their new home. They also adapt quickly to the ideals of liberty, justice, honor, equality and the rule of law that they find here. These are the same ideals that drew them here in the first place.

FRANK SHARRY
Executive director
National Immigration Forum
Washington

Front-page headline leaned in Chinese president's favor

No one seems to have noted the juxtaposition of two headlines on the front page of your July 2 issue.

One headline read, "Jiang still maintains socialism will triumph," and the other read, "Did U.S. scramble caution, or simply lay an egg?" The latter, of course, was in reference to yet another example of

the government bureaucracy's behaving in an overbearing manner. Doesn't it seem that Chinese President Jiang Zemin is right?

What is the state of democracy in the United States? By wielding the authority of the military and civilian bureaucracies through the wide use of executive directives, President Clinton is circumventing the

constitutionally chosen representatives of the people and amassing an undemocratic amount of power in one person. This is in addition to the ever-increasing number of intrusive laws. Is there any turning back?

ROBERT GIOIA
Baltimore

A reader remembers a brush with Allen Dulles

Besides congratulating Joseph C. Goulden for his critique of James Srodes' book "Allen Dulles: Master of Spies," I refer to the last paragraph of his article and would like to add a richly deserved title for Dulles — "Freedom Fighter" ("The greatest spy who ever lived," Political Books, July 6).

I have read and reread Dulles' 1963 book, "The Craft of Intelligence," and there is hardly a better

work than this on the subject. Dulles loved the dangerous work and never seemed to be afraid of it, despite being conscious of risking his life at every turn.

Dulles also wrote two other books, "Germany's Underground" and "Can We Be Neutral?" the latter with Hamilton F. Armstrong. Both of these works are worth reading to round one's knowledge of the intricate "craft," as Dulles aptly called it.

It was my privilege to meet this giant in the defense of our freedoms through mutual acquaintances, and I will never forget having the opportunity to shake his hand.

May the good Lord rest his soul in a privileged place, and may his example inspire those who still toil in that perilous terrain.

JOSE G. ROIG
Arlington

Thatcher's comments should not stand in the way of justice

In your July 7 World Scene brief "Thatcher accuses left of Pinochet plot," we discover that the former British prime minister charges that the "organized international left" has victimized former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and thus has damaged Great Britain's "reputation for loyalty and fair play. . . ."

The "Iron Lady" is, of course, referring to the decision of the law lords and the home secretary to allow the extradition process to go forward, which, at first glance, does not indicate the makings of a plot. Rather, the ruling allows a Spanish court to continue to seek authorization in the British courts to have the Chilean general appear before a Spanish judge for possible prosecution for the deaths of Spanish nationals in Chile under his rule. Not included in your news brief about Mrs. Thatcher's remarks was her statement praising Gen. Pinochet for his support of Great

Britain in the 1982 Falkland Islands conflict with Argentina. She said Great Britain "owes him a great debt."

Mrs. Thatcher described the then military rulers of Argentina as being "tin-pot" dictators. Demonstrably, her revered Gen. Pinochet also would seem to be a candidate for such a designation, because he killed and made disappear far more innocent civilians than his Argentine then-counterpart ever managed to do during his 1973-90 dictatorship. Recently declassified U.S. documents have shed new light on the atrocities that occurred in Chile under Gen. Pinochet and the extent to which the United States knew about them. Gen. Pinochet's self-serving support for narrow British interests cannot exonerate him from the terrible acts perpetrated by the Chilean military under his command or their being minimized by the former British leader, whose

capacity for selective indignation is notorious.

The international community would do well to ignore Mrs. Thatcher's banal blatherings and press the point that Gen. Pinochet should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. This should be done to set the precedent that human rights violations within a country's borders do not allow for impunity outside of them. Hopefully, the Pinochet case will come to demonstrate that torture, murder and rape are unacceptable under any circumstances, and leaders who practice such horrific abuses will face prosecution in international courts — despite their tactical political alliances with self-serving political figures such as Mrs. Thatcher.

DAVID ROBERTS
Research associate
Council on Hemispheric Affairs
Washington

IRANE -

I THOUGHT SOMEONE

SHOULD RESPOND TO THIS.

overall general policy - ~~Do not pick up~~
up let it die. Unskilled categories

Immigration, the Issue-in-Waiting

By George J. Borjas

In times of plenty, it's easy to celebrate our historically high levels of immigration as a boon to the economy. But even with low inflation, a tight labor market, budget surpluses and the Dow hovering around 10,000, we shouldn't fall prey to the illusion that potential problems caused by immigration can be ignored indefinitely.

Every year, the United States admits some 800,000 legal immigrants, and another 300,000 illegal aliens manage to enter the country and stay. Such figures caused great consternation in the early 1990's, and as recently as 1996 President Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress concurred that something had to be done about the rising cost of immigrants' participation in welfare programs. Their response was to deny many types of assistance to noncitizens.

Since then, rising prosperity has muted their sense of urgency. The most Draconian provisions of the welfare reform law — like removing legal immigrants from the rolls of some programs — weren't enforced. And

George J. Borjas, a professor of public policy at Harvard, is the author of the forthcoming "Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy."

President Clinton's 1999 State of the Union speech introduced programs to restore aid to some immigrants.

Talk of immigrants' taking jobs away from American-born workers has given way to a new pop sociology lauding the role of diversity in the labor market. ("Isn't it nice that we can all work together?") News coverage stresses that immigration has

We may pay later for our relatively open door now.

saved entire industries from extinction, including the garment business and California agriculture.

Last year, after reports of labor shortages in high-tech companies, Congress voted to increase the number of "high-tech braceros" — the temporary workers whom these businesses import — by 150,000 over three years. This despite the equally forceful claims by high-tech workers that the additional immigrants would lower their wages.

So what will happen when the economy hits a bump? The fiscal consequences of our current levels of immigration will be severe. Immigrants

still receive welfare disproportionately: 21 percent of immigrant households received assistance in 1998, compared with 15 percent of nonimmigrant households.

What do we do when there are extensive layoffs of the many immigrants employed in marginal jobs, or in the marginal industries that produce goods that can be just as cheaply imported from abroad?

We should also keep in mind that about a third of new arrivals lack a high school diploma, compared with 9 percent of American-born workers. It's great that these less skilled immigrants are boosting entire industries and that employers' lower labor costs are translating into lower prices for consumers. But many of these jobs would probably have been filled by less skilled natives.

And let's not forget that our current immigration policy is on autopilot: because immigrants can sponsor the entry of their close and not-so-close relatives, the annual influx of almost one million immigrants entitles millions more to enter the country at some future time — perhaps a time when the economy is in a slump.

Without the political pressures of long unemployment lines and budget deficits, now is the time to consider whether the country would be better off with a different immigration policy — a policy that pays more attention to fiscal consequences and to the economic impact on those at the bottom rungs of the economic ladder. □

The New York Times

FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 1999

Immigration, the Issue-in-Waiting

By George J. Borjas

In times of plenty, it's easy to celebrate our historically high levels of immigration as a boon to the economy. But even with low inflation, a tight labor market, budget surpluses and the Dow hovering around 10,000, we shouldn't fall prey to the illusion that potential problems caused by immigration can be ignored indefinitely. Every year, the United States admits some 800,000 legal immigrants, and another 300,000 illegal aliens manage to enter the country and stay. Such figures caused great consternation in the early 1990's, and as recently as 1996 President Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress concurred that something had to be done about the rising cost of immigrants' participation in welfare programs. Their response was to deny many types of assistance to noncitizens. Since then, rising prosperity has muted their sense of urgency. The most Draconian provisions of the welfare reform law — like removing legal immigrants from the rolls of some programs — weren't enforced. And

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for our relatively
open door now.**

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NYT 4/2/99

Let Immigrants Organize for Better Wages

To the Editor:

Re "Immigration Boosts Our Economy" (letters, April 6):

The Immigration and Naturalization Service raids in several Yakima Valley warehouses in Washington State where workers were organizing violated the practice of noninterference with union campaigns. The raids occurred as agribusiness was lobbying for new guest worker laws similar to the "bracero" program that created horrifying conditions for Mexican migrant workers from the 1940's to the 60's.

Enacting a new guest worker program that lifts the requirement to recruit locally would depress wages and make it harder for farm workers to organize. Instead, we should enforce the rights of the immigrants already here to organize for better pay and working conditions.

NIEVES NEGRETE

Granger, Wash., April 6, 1999

The writer is with the Washington Alliance for Immigrant and Refugee Justice.

To the Editor:

Re "Veterans Lead a New Charge" (Week in Review, April 4): Veterans are not the only legal permanent residents suffering unjustly as a result of immigration laws. Since October of last year, all legal permanent residents in deportation proceedings are subject to mandatory detention regardless of the nature of their original offenses.

Hundreds of legal permanent residents — some veterans, some not — are appealing their deportations from inside Immigration and Naturalization Service detention centers,

Correction

Because of an editing error, a letter published yesterday on teen-age smoking misstated the population of New York. New York has about three million more residents than Florida. The letter also rendered a sentence incorrectly. It should have said that New York spent less than one-tenth as much as Florida to reduce smoking.

where they will be held without bail until a decision is made.

Moreover, many legal permanent residents are being detained thousands of miles from their families and loved ones for periods of time much longer than their original sentences. This means that from the time they are taken into custody, if deported, many will never see their families again.

CAITLIN MONTAGUE

New York, April 5, 1999

To the Editor:

George J. Borjas (Op-Ed, April 2) urges immigration reform during our relatively prosperous economy.

But curiously muted in the discussion of such changes is the low replacement fertility rates among native-born Americans, which has been the case in the United States for 24 consecutive years, and for several decades in most developed countries. Heavy immigration has delayed or diminished some of the negative effects of below-replacement fertility rates.

Responsible demographers consider continued immigration as an imperative in order for developed countries to survive should present native-born birth rates hold.

(Rev.) JOSEPH A. FAHY

Atlanta, April 6, 1999

The writer is Hispanic apostolate, Archdiocese of Atlanta.



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Next, Vojvodina?

To the Editor:

Re "Time to Get Serious" (column, April 3): The West should entertain no illusions about a long-term cohabitation with Slobodan Milosevic. Vojvodina is another colony of Serbia that is currently under the grip of Belgrade. For now, it is relatively quiet, but so was Kosovo during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

Should Mr. Milosevic turn against the people in Vojvodina, he would find fresh minority groups ready to be slaughtered: Romanians and Hungarians.

This is a plausible development, consistent with Mr. Milosevic's inclinations, and one that could lead to even greater regional trouble than Kosovo.

CATALIN AVRAMESCU

Helsinki, Finland, April 4, 1999

Military Quick Fix

To the Editor:

Re "Serb Forces in Kosovo Under Attack as Weather Clears" (front page, April 6):

Over the last 15 years, we have fought a major war in Iraq and two behind-the-scenes wars, in Afghanistan and Nicaragua. We have invaded Panama and Grenada and used our superior military force to strike at Libya, Yugoslavia (over Bosnia and Kosovo) and Sudan. We have put our Army and the Marines at great human loss in Lebanon, Somalia and Haiti. Why are we always in a hurry to seek military solutions? There have got to be better ways to promote our national interests.

DENNIS MENOS

Bethesda, Md., April 6, 1999

Greater China Stake

To the Editor:

There is wisdom in Thomas L. Friedman's suggestion (column, April 6) that we cannot afford to become heavily bogged down in Kosovo in a conflict that is not one of our vital interests. I suggest that we have a far more important stake in preventing a forcible takeover of Taiwan by mainland China.

A military conquest of Taiwan would probably insure a jingoistic China for the foreseeable future, bent on regional hegemony.

On the other hand, if Taiwan has to be persuaded to voluntarily rejoin the mainland on generous terms, the likely outcome will be a more democratic nation focused on peaceful progress. It is crucial to our interests and to those of our Asian allies to assist the Chinese people to finally get the government they deserve.

DICK KIDD

Corte Madera, Calif., April 6, 1999

The New York Times

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 1999

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Employee _____ Case No. _____
Station _____ Incident _____

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Age (<i>Edad</i>)	Race (<i>Raza</i>)	Sex (<i>Sexo</i>) M ☐ F ☐	Occupation (<i>Ocupación</i>)	
Name of Witness (<i>Nombre de Testigo</i>)		Address (<i>Domicilio</i>)		Phone No. (<i>Número de Teléfono</i>) ()
				()
				()
				()

Subject of Complaint (<i>Persona de quien se queja</i>) If unknown, please provide description of the employee (<i>Si usted no lo conoce, describa al empleado</i>)	
Name (<i>Nombre</i>)	Description (<i>Descripción</i>)

When did incident occur? (<i>¿Cuándo ocurrió el incidente?</i>)				Location (<i>¿Dónde ocurrió el incidente?</i>)
Month (<i>Mes</i>)	Day (<i>Día</i>)	Year (<i>Año</i>)	Time (<i>Hora</i>)	

Details of Complaint (Use additional sheet if necessary) <i>Detalles de la Queja (Uso papel adicional si es necesario)</i>	
I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all my statements are true, correct and made in good faith. (Yo declaro (certifico), a mi mejor conocimiento, que el testimonio hoy dado por mí, es verdadero, correcto y hecho en buena fe.	
_____ Signature of Complainant (<i>Firma</i>)	

Time and Date Reported (<i>Fecha y Hora del Reporte</i>)	Location Reported (<i>Lugar donde se hizo el Reporte</i>)	Agency (<i>Agencia</i>)
_____ Printed Name of Supervisor Receiving Complaint (<i>Nombre en letra de molde del Supervisor Recibiendo Queja</i>)		_____ Signature of Supervisor Receiving Complaint (<i>Firma del Supervisor Recibiendo Queja</i>)

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1998 Annual Report to the Commissioner

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