

National Foundation for American Policy

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New Analysis Places Numerical Impact of Senate Immigration Bill in Context

Says many "immigrating" already would be in the country

ARLINGTON, VA. – Spirited debate has ensued over the numerical impact of S. 2611, immigration legislation that passed the U.S. Senate 62-36 on May 25, 2006. The broader context of the bill is that increasing enforcement alone has proven ineffective in controlling illegal immigration. New research from the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP), an Arlington, VA-based public policy group, finds particularly in the first 10 years, many of those "immigrating" under the Senate legislation already would be in the country, including here lawfully on temporary visas, and merely transferring status to become a legal immigrant. A complete copy of the study is available at www.nfap.com.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that in the bill's first 10 years, 59 percent of new legal immigrants under S. 2611 would be "individuals who are or will be in the United States under current law and would change their immigration status." Most of the others are close relatives of U.S. citizens who will come to the U.S. sooner, rather than waiting years separated overseas, and new skilled employment-based immigrants, who will be able to stay and create innovations in America, rather than leaving the country (or never coming in the first place) because of 5 year waits for green cards.

The NFAP analysis concludes that over 20 years the United States will admit approximately 28.48 million net new legal immigrants under Senate bill S. 2611. This represents an average increase of 1.42 million per year, many of whom, as noted by the CBO, would not be "new" people entering the country but already would be in the United States and become counted as legal immigrants.

The NFAP analysis finds that earlier analyses by Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL) and Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation overstated the bill's likely impact by claiming as many as 200 million people could immigrate under the bill over 20 years, though Rector's most recent estimate was a net increase of 47 million legal immigrants. A number of U.S. Senators cited Rector's estimates when declaring opposition to S. 2611.

"It is useful in debating legislation to have reasonably accurate estimates available and, more importantly, that the numbers be placed in context. That is the purpose of this analysis," said Stuart Anderson, Executive Director, National Foundation for American Policy. The analysis concludes, "In the end, the debate about immigration is not about numbers. It's about our values and traditions, our

hearts and minds, and about which policies will make America a better place.”

Tamar Jacoby, Senior Fellow, of the New York-based Manhattan Institute, said, “This is an important study that provides a thoughtful analysis of the Senate legislation. What can be missed in the discussion over numbers is that the goal of the bill is to recognize the reality of the existing flow – and of the economic and demographic changes generating that flow – and to bring U.S. law more into line with those realities, rationalizing the system and restoring the rule of law.”

20 YEAR ESTIMATE OF NET LEGAL IMMIGRATION UNDER S. 2611

Immigration Category Under S. 2611	Estimated Net Number of Legal Immigrants Over 20 Years
Employment-based	10.08 million
Family-based	5.08 million
Legalization	8.8 million
Blue-card	1.76 million
Other	2.76 million
TOTAL (net increase under S. 2611)	28.48 million

Source: National Foundation for American Policy; Congressional Research Service, Congressional Budget Office.

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About the National Foundation for American Policy

Started in 2003, NFAP is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to public policy research on trade, immigration and other issues of national importance. Its Advisory Board members include economist Jagdish Bhagwati (Columbia University); economist Richard Vedder (Ohio State University); former U.S. Rep. Guy Vander Jagt (MI); Cesar Conda, former Domestic Policy Advisor for Vice President Dick Cheney, and others.

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