

Mass Deportations

Deporting all of the illegal immigrants is not feasible either financially or logistically. Estimates vary on the number of illegal immigrants in the United States, but the number may be around 12 million¹. In 2006 the Washington, DC ‘think tank’ Center for American Progress issued a report stating that deporting 10 million illegal immigrants would cost \$206 billion over five years (\$41.2 billion annually), and could reach over \$230 billion². This includes the increased cost of allocating more resources to tracking down immigrants and assuming that millions more will return of their own accord when they see the deportations occurring. In 2007 Julie L. Myers, then-chief of ICE, told a congressional hearing that they had estimated the cost to be a (comparatively) low \$94 billion³. The main divergence was the estimate on just how much it would cost to hire personnel and pay them to rout out the immigrants. But whether the cost is \$94 billion or \$230 billion, the cost would be a tremendous burden in light of the current budget deficit of over \$700 billion.⁴

ICE’s study also assumed that immigrants would only be detained for an average 32 days before being deported at a cost of \$97 a day⁵. However, these estimates are based on the currently existing facilities. Considering that in the five year period between 2004 and 2008, fewer than 1.7 million immigration court matters were completed⁶, it is simply inconceivable that the government could handle 10 million cases in five years without building new detention centers and immigration court facilities and training new personnel. The building of facilities and training of personnel are both tasks that will take time and planning to complete. The massive effort involved in quintupling our deportation system is not only a financial matter, but a logistical one.

The direct cost of tracking down and deporting illegal immigrants is not the only cost of mass deportations. Many illegal immigrants are married to permanent residents or US citizens and/or have US citizen children. Estimates on the number of US citizen children of illegal immigrants are around 4 million⁷. What will happen to all of these children when one or both parents is deported? Either these family members will accompany the departing immigrants or will remain in the US possibly without the family wage-earner. Some children may remain with a US citizen or permanent resident parent, while some will go live with other relatives or friends of the family. Those who remain may need to

¹ *A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States*, Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009, <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=107>

² Center for American Progress, *Deporting the Undocumented: A Cost Assessment*, July 26, 2005. Report available at: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2005/07/b913099.html>.

³ New York Times, *Estimate for Deporting Illegal Immigrants: \$94 Billion*, Mike Nizza, Sept. 13, 2007. <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/09/13/estimate-for-deporting-illegal-immigrants-94-billion/>.

⁴ *Budget deficit reaches \$765B in 5 months*, Yahoo Finance, March 11, 2009, <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/Budget-deficit-reaches-record-apf-14607450.html>

⁵ Id

⁶ U.S. Dept of Justice, *Executive Office of Immigration Review, FY 2008 Statistical Year*, pg. B2

⁷ *Study: 4 Million ‘Illegal’ Immigrant Children are Native-Born Citizens*, CNN, April 14, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/04/14/citizen.children/index.html?iref=mpstoryview>

turn to social services to make up for the loss of the immigrant's income. Still other families, concerned about crime rates, poverty, and the medical and educational standards in the immigrant's home country, may decide that leaving the US citizen children to the foster care system in the US is the best option. If just half a million of these four million children are placed in foster care, this would double the number of children in foster care in the United States⁸, overburdening an already overburdened system and costing over \$4 billion per year⁹. This is aside from the human cost of the family separation.

There will be many other repercussions of mass deportations. Small communities with disproportionate numbers of illegal immigrants could be devastated.¹⁰ The number of US citizens erroneously taken into custody by immigration officials¹¹ may increase. Accusations of racial profiling and other civil rights abuses¹² may increase. A massive deportation effort has the potential to increase tensions between Latino communities and government officials.¹³ Children from families split up by deportations may grow up with resentment for the government. And it is difficult to envision that violence over the issue¹⁴ would not increase, which would generally increase political instability in the nation. Political instability may lead to economic instability¹⁵. Should the government decide to accept all of the financial burden and other repercussions, it would be doing so to pursue a measure only 3 in 10 American supports¹⁶. Furthermore, if the incentive remains that caused the immigrant to come in the first place, the immigrant may simply re-enter following deportation.

If one accepts that mass deportations are simply not practical, then we are left with only two remaining options: either provide a way for over 10 million illegal immigrants to gain lawful status or continue to live with a long-term mass underclass. Obviously the second option is simply unacceptable to Americans because we are better than that. We *are* better than that, right?

⁸ US DHHS, Children's Bureau, Foster Care FY2002 - FY2006 Entries, Exits, and Numbers of Children In Care on the Last Day of Each Federal Fiscal Year, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/statistics/entryexit2006.htm

⁹ Child Welfare League of America, The President's FY 2009 Budget and Children (states, "The Administration's budget projects that Title IV-E Foster Care spending will be \$4.449 billion") <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/budgetchildren09.htm>

¹⁰ Postville overwhelmed by sudden shutdown of Agriprocessors plant, WCF Courier, Nov 23, 2008, <http://www.wfcourier.com/articles/2008/11/23/news/local/doc4928eda5dcc76113211106.txt>

¹¹ Star Tribune, U.S. citizen's near-deportation not a rarity, Jan. 26, 2008, available at <http://www.startribune.com/nation/14456137.html>

¹² Notice from The US Department of Justice to Sheriff Arpaio of Maricopi County, AZ that he is under investigation for alleged civil rights abuses. Sheriff Arpaio is known for his crackdown of illegal immigration. <http://big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/dojtoarpaio.pdf>

¹³ *ICE Raids Put Local Latino Community On Edge*, KTVU.com, May 6, 2008, <http://www.ktvu.com/news/16182667/detail.html>

¹⁴ *L.A. anti-immigration rally turns violent*, CNN.com, July 4, 2000, <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/US/07/04/immigration.rally/>

¹⁵ *Political Instability: Its Effects on Financial Development, Its Roots in the Severity of Economic Inequality*, M. Roe and J. Siegel, Social Science Research Network, Feb 20, 2009, http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=963214

¹⁶ <http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/10/17/poll.immigration/index.html?iref=newssearch>

