The Case for Just-in-Time Immigration

Why America needs a personnel system built for the 21st century.

BY HILDA OCHOA-BRILLEMBOURG | MARCH 13, 2013

It is often said that government could learn a thing or two from the private sector, but what if the very same management innovations that powered the recent surge in global productivity could be leveraged to solve America’s immigration problem? It sounds far-fetched, but “just-in-time” production strategy -- which matches supply and demand for manufacturing components, thereby reducing wasteful imbalances -- is crying out to be applied to immigration policy. We have the technology and the data to do it -- all we need is the will.

Despite persistent unemployment problems, the United States faces significant labor shortages, particularly in the manufacturing and technology sectors. Large employers like Siemens, Apple, Microsoft, and LinkedIn, for example, have struggled to fill thousands of job openings because of the lack of suitable candidates. Meanwhile, current immigration policies permit too few skilled worker visas and dictate long waiting periods for skilled H-1B visa holders to obtain green cards. Current green card quotas, moreover, are woefully insufficient to meet labor demands in many sectors. Fortunately, there’s an easy fix for this mismatch between supply and demand for human capital: dynamic “just-in-time” labor and immigration policies that let in immigrants as they are needed.

American success in the postwar period was built on the free flow of trade and capital -- and human capital was an essential part of the story. From 1970 onward, roughly 10 million college-educated women chose to work professionally instead of becoming full-time wives and mothers. Between 1970 and 1990, 17 million immigrants came to the United States, and made profound contributions to construction, agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and the service sector. They also changed the lives of a generation of working mothers. The availability of legal, reasonably priced childcare allowed women to manage their familial obligations while competing in the global work force. The advent of the dual-income family, in turn, provided a formidable boost to our consumption-driven economy for the next four decades.

Today, human capital flows are seriously obstructed by political gridlock in Washington. At the same time, the Baby Boomer generation is graying, retiring, and increasingly relying on the social welfare programs to which it contributed -- but not enough given the longer life expectancy of its members. In a blink of an eye, it seems, the Boomers have gone from the locomotive to the caboose.

The key to solving this demographic challenge is a sustained and selective immigration policy. Based on data collected by the PEW Research Center and the Department of Labor-Bureau of Labor Statistics, the United States needs roughly 50 million new immigrants over the next 20 years in order to meet our demographic and balance-sheet demands. That's about 2.5 million immigrants per year, compared to the roughly 2 million (one million legally and one million, give or take, illegally) who have arrived in the United States every year for the last two decades. It's not much of an increase -- 500,000 people per year -- but it's enough to make a positive difference in our fiscal deficits, consumption, savings, and investment needs, and to take care of the household and other employment demands of an aging population.
To meet these needs, the United States should adopt four policies that balance supply and demand for human capital -- bringing the U.S. immigration system more in line with just-in-time principles. First, the government should make it easier for foreign students who graduate from U.S. colleges and graduate schools to obtain work visas, as Mayor Bloomberg and others have suggested. The United States trained them, so it should have the option of keeping them.

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6 COMMENTS

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Conversation on FP.com

ed_robinson

This is a really bad article.

How about not bringing people to the US as indentured servants (H1B) who will do whatever management wants in order to bring down wages to below living level. And instead install a real minimum wage level above which bring talented and educated (not desperate) people from abroad can have real rights.

We don't need to give every person rich enough to pay for a US education a Green Card. (That's essentially selling them off for $75k or less a pop.) We need to endure that local people get a fair shake and can make a real living after taking out loans to pay for 2-6 years in grad school. If you're really talented... great! If you can afford an education here... meh.

How about making the paper and tax burden easier for US citizens working abroad? There's no point to prioritizing benefits for rich non-residents ahead of those who already live or have a connection to the US. To suggest so is offensive.

In fact, if the women cited by the article can't get a job that pays a decent wage, then they're more likely to stay home... and not pay for an au pair to come to the US.

I really hope that FP gets some better contributors. This kind of article makes me want to look into discussions on Shaker furniture or stamps of the 19th century (where people really know what they're talking about).

DaveFrancis1

ANOTHER INCREDULOUS ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION LIE?

Why is President Obama, and all those elected to Democratic posts, using the “Sequester” to incredulously cut a whole list of issues in sacrificing such major combinations as military hardware, benefits to servicemen such as cuts to tuition for soldiers, assistance for homeless veterans, closing hospitality tours to the
White House, cuts to air traffic controllers and now the Border Patrol budgets. This is especially heinous, when foreign nationals who stole into this country through areas of the border understaffed and mostly unguarded where there is no barrier, other than hundreds of miles badly weather-beaten rusty barbed wire that restricts nothing and certainly not a determined movement illegal aliens, drug smuggler or even terrorists. Why are we severing all these benefits, but low income people (illegal aliens) are collecting on food stamps, free medical treatments, and a combination of freebies, for their children; arriving under the cloak of a family visiting Disneyland or Washington DC on a jet plane from Europe, Asia or any nation and then disappearing into the United State when there is no way to track them. Having no significant punishment for the first illegal entry, illegal aliens have promulgated throughout this country, with no existent prohibitions.

The Sequester has been carefully engineered by the administration to cause the most alarm, to scare the most easily susceptible general populace.

From the time of the first major enforcement law in 1986, called the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), that was entirely collusion between the U.S. Business complex, Agriculture and a whole bunch of less visible organizations and entities, which had the financial ear of those, involved in implementing its policies, were intentionally made less than effectual. Since the fraudulent aspect of that major amnesty each inept administration has been presumed to be protecting the American people, but if you picture the whole development only when there has been the emotional voice from the public audience. Nothing has passed scrutiny since the 1986 (IRCA) law was in place, because nobody has trusted any administration to do the right thing? There has been too much pandering to ethnic majorities to steal the vote. Ask why and then realize that smuggled children become instant citizens and thereby the Mother can caste her net over the citizen’s benefits available to her, including Section 8 housing if she starts bearing more and more children. As part of citizen’s entitlement programs for the low income, the prize is around $600.00 per infant, compliments of the American taxpayer. Now having a place to live the family across the border or in another country, has a place to live, get an illegal job, with no competition from an American worker, because the dishonest employer doesn’t care. His bottom line is profit and will depend on the poor enforcement and a fine, instead of being whisked away to jail. A majority knows exactly what they are doing and use enterprising attorney’s to find loopholes in the visa system, so immigrants they sponsor are less than genuine the cream of (Stem) Scientists, Technology, Engineers and Mathematician employees.

In 2006 Former President Bush commissioned a design for a solid, double layer fence to reach from California to Texas, which would have stayed many of the illegal entries across our Southern border. Two fences with a fast track lane for the rapid movement of U.S. Border Patrol vehicles. The interior fence would be fortified as many outside prison enclosures consisting of heavy chain link fence attired with concertina razor wire. Unlike the miserable one structure fencing we have at this time, which was secretly underfunded and even today far from finished. The current singular main strength is in heavily populated areas, but outside the different Border Patrol sectors it dwindles away and easily circumvented by foreign people.

As Washington struggles to find a solution to the federal budget cuts in the recent sequester, the U.S. Border Patrol has begun to cut back, and the numbers are already beginning show immigrants are taking advantage of it.

Just 4.5 miles north of the Falfurrias checkpoint, Mike and Linda Vickers live on a 1,000 acre ranch in Brooks County. When Mike moved to the ranch in the 1980’s he says he would see about two or three immigrants crossing his property each week.

Today he sees about 20 or 30 a day, tearing up his fences, breaking water pipes, some even breaking into his house.

“The fences are cut, the properties trashed out,” Mike said. “We have traffic absolutely every day, big groups, small groups.”

The border gets more dangerous each day and we are supposed to believe the lies of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano or United States Attorney General Eric Holder and their collection of un-American minions and Liberal Progressive minions, who have obviously lost their credibility to most of us. While the raging gun laws preoccupy the thought of the Obama administration, the ugly incidence of “Fast and Furious” gun running to Mexico has petered-out. Each day illegal alien’s slip across the wide range of the border, and this accelerate in the coming months, with recognizing that they have a good chance of being added to the 11 million to 25 million plus, who could be granted citizenship. We should not forget that why hundreds of thousands await a working visa, others see a much easier alternative of just buying an airline ticket, to what they expect is a new future for them and the rest of their family circle. Either overstays of illegal immigrants or migrants from across the border are already versed in our immigration laws and ready to cheat the honest people. ? After the so called immigration reform package, we should ALL be issued with a federal photo ID identification card with a thumb print and retinal scans must be part of the new law. Every year 100 billion dollars slip through taxpayers fingers, because the corrupt scoundrels in the D.C. power house represent big business and are pandering to illegal aliens. A real double layer fence as the 2006 Secure Fence Act also must be compulsory.

Just building the real fencing is not the most important barrier to illegal immigration, but the people must speak up for internal enforcement as SAVE ACT, with a provision of the E-Verify, which carries the notorious label to businesses that insist of using cheap labor. Easily accessible on any computer E-Verify distinguishes between an unauthorized worker and a citizen or legal resident who has been inspected. Of course the most controversial issue is a change in our 14th amendment, to stop illegal alien women bringing in undetected fetuses to gain citizenship for the baby. This by far, is the greatest expense to our nation that ranges in the hundreds of billions of dollars annually in this unethical new citizenship source of which the consequences is sequence of events of the current DREAM ACT, FAMILY CHAIN MIGRATION, THEN SANCTUARY CITY POLICIES that ICE AGENTS ARE ORDERED NOT TO TOUCH. THEN EVENTUALLY A VISA BEING ISSUED FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCY AND THOSE ILLEGAL PERSONS ARE NO LONGER DEPORTABLE.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/13/the_case_for_just_in_time_immigration 04/08/2013
ALL AMERICANS Should sign a petition against the Gang of Eight's scheme and other nonchalant lawmakers who are in disagreement with the 23 million unemployed Americans at: NumberUSA. If you really want your voice counted write a letter to your congressman (a screener will read it and tally up the letters ‘for’ and ‘against’) so you don’t have to fret about being persuasive since all the congressman hears is an amount of letters. Phone calls are better, but here you need to be rational and not an embarrassing tirade. YOU can also contact every Representative demanding no Amnesty and no Path to Citizenship at 202-224-3121, the Central Washington switchboard. LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR BORDER AND INVESTIGATE EVERYTHING AT AMERICANPATROL.

DrKuchbhi
Nobody likes "outsiders" taking "your" job.

The way to tackle this in the short term versus the long term are very different. The long term solution is to reduce the cost of college education in the US. Going to college is a brain dead decision in the countries that LEGAL immigration is coming from. In the US that choice will break the bank and deplete all of your parents savings and immerse you in debt for a decade or two. That is stupid for a country that wants to be at the forefront of but there is ZERO effort to fix it.

The way to tackle this in a way that will win you votes versus a way that is in the country’s interest are also different. If you want to win votes it is clear that speaking against ILLEGAL immigration will hurt you decisively. So the squeaky wheel gets the oil.

CharlesEdwardBrown
There are plenty of scientists and engineers available in the United States. Before we allow more immigrants into the country, lets start hiring Americans. Many companies want to take advantage of immigrants with long hours and low pay. Salaries of skilled Engineers have remained flat for over 10 years while management of these big corporations get bigger salaries and bonuses. If you want more skilled workers that offer better salaries. Offer more benefits instead of cutting them back and train the people you need.

FranzLiebkind
I've never read so much management-speak in a Foreign Policy piece as Ms. Ochoa-Brillembourg has on offer here, at least without the article being a parody. "Just-in-time"? "Labor mobility challenge"? "First mover advantage"? "Win-win"? I feel as if she is living in a Dilbert cartoon and I'm playing buzzword bingo.

Notable is her article’s lack of any discussion of the training of, say, Americans past 50 to perform those “surplus” manufacturing jobs that are going unfilled.