

## **Rocky Mountain News**

### **After analyzing data, foundation finds 28 million a more likely figure**

**By Stuart Anderson**  
**July 1, 2006**

Spirited debate has ensued over how many legal immigrants the Senate-passed immigration bill would allow. The broader context is that increasing enforcement alone has proved an ineffective way to control illegal immigration.

An analysis conducted by the National Foundation for American Policy concludes that over 20 years the United States would admit approximately 28.48 million net new legal immigrants under the Senate bill.

Here is how the foundation arrived at this conclusion:

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that in the bill's first 10 years, 59 percent of new legal immigrants would be "individuals who are or will be in the United States under current law and would change their immigration status." In short, many of those "immigrating" are illegal residents now in the country.

Foundation research finds earlier analyses by Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., and the Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector - both acting in good faith - overstated the bill's likely impact.

Everyone agrees the Senate legislation would increase the family preference quotas from 226,000 to 480,000 a year. These primarily affect the adult children and siblings of U.S. citizens and the spouses of legal residents.

Individuals already permitted to immigrate legally could come here sooner, perhaps in two to five years rather than waiting six to 12 years.

Also, no one disagrees the Senate bill increases employment-based immigration from the current 140,000 to no more than 650,000 a year, although likely less. Today, highly skilled individuals wait in legal limbo five years or more for their green cards. This uncertainty leads some of them to leave the country and persuades others to avoid coming to America in the first place.

The bill enacts two different legalization programs. One is for agricultural workers, the other for those who have been in the U.S. illegally either for five years or more, or from two and five years.

Following the analysis of the Congressional Budget Office, the foundation estimates that approximately 888,000 agricultural workers and 4 million other immigrants in the country illegally for five years or more would obtain permanent residence (green cards) under the bill; family members of the two groups would add about another 6.5 million.

The Senate bill increased the number of legal temporary visas. This is key, since the only proven way to control the border is to open up paths to legal entry.

Some background: In 1954, Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner Joseph Swing cracked down on illegal immigration. First, he replaced an illegal source of Mexican farm workers with a legal, regulated labor supply through the bracero program.

The Mexican workers preferred entering legally. Bracero admissions rose from approximately 201,000 in 1953 to more than 430,000 a year between 1956 and 1959.

Illegal entry, as measured by INS apprehensions at the border, fell by an astonishing 95 percent between 1953 and 1959.

However, complaints from unions ended the program by 1964. And illegal immigration skyrocketed. From 1964 to 1976, INS apprehensions of those entering illegally increased more than 1,000 percent.

The Senate bill increases legal immigration to achieve a compromise that enhances immigration enforcement, legalizes those here unlawfully, and establishes new mechanisms to allow lesser-skilled workers to enter and work here legally.

Prior to complaints by critics, the Senate bill allowed 325,000 new temporary visas annually for low-skilled positions. It also permitted the cap to rise by 20 percent if there were more applicants than that in a prior year.

Sessions and Rector erroneously counted every new temporary visa holder as a permanent legal immigrant, even though such individuals would only have the right to stay temporarily.

Moreover, under the Senate bill, as the Congressional Research Service points out, both new temporary workers and those who were here illegally from two to five years would only receive green cards "subject to the numerical limitations on employment-based immigrant visas."

In effect, Sessions and Rector counted new temporary workers twice; this helps to explain how they concluded that the Senate bill would allow 61 million new legal immigrants over the next 20 years.

Their criticism, however, led to a reduction in temporary visas for lesser skilled jobs from 325,000 a year down to a hard cap of 200,000.

This makes the number of new temporary visas too low to accommodate the current annual flow of about 400,000 illegal immigrants.

So the irony in the debate over numbers is that critics of the Senate bill have undermined the most effective method to reduce illegal immigration - letting the supply of immigrants keep pace with the demands for their services.

*Stuart Anderson, former staff director of the Senate Immigration Subcommittee, is executive director of the **National Foundation for American Policy**, a nonpartisan research organization based in Arlington, Va. Its analysis of the Senate bill can be found at [www.nfap.com](http://www.nfap.com).*

## Rocky Mountain News

### Up to 61 million immigrants might flow into U.S. under proposed reform

By Robert Rector  
July 1, 2006

Think the immigration debate is mainly about giving amnesty to the 10 million illegals already here? Think again. Amnesty is a drop in the bucket. The real issue is the staggering increase in legal immigration hidden in the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, recently passed in the Senate.

By a ratio of about 4-1, U.S. voters would prefer less immigration, not more. But the Senate bill would do just the opposite. The original bill would have allowed as many as 100 million people to legally immigrate to the United States over the next 20 years. We're talking about a seismic shift of unprecedented proportions.

Facing criticism, the Senate has amended the bill - which now would allow "only" 61 million new immigrants. That still more than doubles the current legal immigration rate, from 1 million a year now to 2.5 million.

Current law would let 19 million legal immigrants enter the United States over the next 20 years; the Senate immigration bill would add an extra 42 million.

Why such extraordinary growth? Consider how the new law would work.

Under the Senate bill, immigrants could enter or attain lawful status within the country through nine channels. In each channel, immigrants would gain permanent residence and the right to become citizens:

**Current law visas:** About 950,000 persons now get permanent-residence visas every year under current law. Over 20 years, the inflow of immigrants through this channel would be 19 million.

**Amnesty:** The bill would grant amnesty to roughly 10 million illegal immigrants now living in the U.S.

**Spouses/children of illegal immigrants given amnesty:** Illegals who got amnesty could bring their spouses and children into the country as legal permanent residents with the opportunity for full citizenship. The resulting number of spouses and children who would enter the United States? At least 5 million.

**"Family chain" migration:** Today's law limits the number of kinship visas for secondary family members, such as adult brothers and sisters. The Senate bill would raise the cap on such secondary family immigration from around 230,000 to 480,000 per year, bringing in 5 million new immigrants over 20 years.

**Temporary guest workers for life:** The amended Senate bill would let 200,000 people enter through the guest-worker program each year. Over 20 years, that works out to a total inflow of 4 million. The "guest workers" aren't temporary at all, but could stay in the U.S. permanently and become citizens.

**Spouses/children of guest workers:** Guest workers could bring their spouses and children to the United States as permanent residents, adding another 4.8 million entrants over 20 years.

**Worker visas for skilled specialty occupations:** The Senate bill would initially double the number of specialty workers who could enter the U.S., and would then allow the number to increase by 20 percent in each subsequent year. These workers would be permitted to request permanent residence, and, in most cases, would be able to stay in the U.S. for life. More than 5.5 million legal immigrant workers could enter under these provisions over the next two decades.

**Spouses/children of specialty workers:** Specialty workers could bring their spouses and children to the United States as permanent residents, adding another 3 million entrants over 20 years.

**Refugee women:** Under the bill, an unlimited number of women who fear they may undergo "harm" as a result of their sex may enter the U.S. as refugees and become citizens. The numbers who would enter under this open-ended provision is uncertain, but 1 million over 20 years is a reasonable estimate.

**Parents of naturalized citizens:** The Senate bill would greatly increase the number of naturalized citizens, each would have an unlimited right to bring their parents into the country as legal permanent residents. The resulting number of parents who would enter as permanent legal residents? Around 3.5 million over 20 years.

If the Senate bill became law, foreign-born immigrants would rise to around 18 percent of the total U.S. population, an immigration level far higher than at any previous time in U.S. history.

Many in this looming tidal wave of immigration would be low-skilled individuals who will impose great social and economic costs on the nation. For example, more than half of the 10 million illegals who will get amnesty are high-school dropouts; on average, each immigrant dropout will cost the U.S. taxpayers \$85,000 over the course of his life.

In sum, the Senate bill would bring profound change, transforming the United States socially, economically and politically. Within two decades, the character of our country would differ dramatically from what exists today.

Americans need to ask: Is that what we want?

*Robert Rector is a senior research fellow at The Heritage Foundation ([heritage.org](http://heritage.org)).*