

Immigration

Utah Citizens' Counsel Dignity and Respect for Human Beings Committee

Article 1. All Utahns, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender and gender identity, language, disability, political preference, age, birth status, military status, or other status, are entitled equally to dignity and respect as human beings and to equitable treatment under the law.

Introduction

Among the myriad subjects that might have been covered in this article, immigration continued to be an inflammatory issue throughout the presidential campaign and election, so a brief factual update is appropriate. The most significant federal immigration change was the June U. S. Supreme Court 4-4 decision blocking President Barack Obama's 2014 Executive Action on Immigration. There were no attempted policy changes in Utah, but a new report that identified the significant contributions of immigrants in Utah deserves attention.

Supreme Court Decision

In *U.S. v. Texas*, the Court effectively ended the President's effort to allow as many as five million unauthorized immigrants who are parents of citizens or lawful permanent residents to apply for a program that would provide work permits and protect them from deportation.¹ The tie in the Supreme Court was made possible by the Senate's refusal to hold a hearing on or confirm President Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Known as DAPA, the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans was expected to be this administration's legacy on immigration. The Court's decision does not affect his 2012 order that has allowed 730,000 Dreamers (children brought here during a designated time period who passed a specific application process) to work legally in this country. Ironically, President Obama's chief immigration legacy may be the years of raids in communities and increased enforcement at the border resulting in more deportations than under any previous administration. The tough tactics, mostly from his first term, did not lead to a compromise with Republicans on legislation but led instead to 2.4 million people being deported between 2009 and 2014. Visa overstays made up about 40% of the nation's undocumented.²

Closure of Provo Detention Center

A 120-day transitional period began on August 9, 2016 to remove immigrants detained in the Utah County Jail by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Those detainees made up about 20-30% of the jail's population. An influx of local offenders had overcrowded the jail, and jail workers had been on mandatory overtime because the facility was short-staffed, according to an article in the *Salt Lake Tribune*.³ The largest facility with an ICE contract now appears to be in Henderson, Nevada.

Immigrant Labor, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Are Critical Components of Utah's Economy

A group of Utah business, faith, and civic leaders joined in a roundtable discussion on August 3, 2016 to discuss a newly released report by the Partnership for a New American Economy. Based in New York City, the Partnership launched a campaign to urge Congress to take action on immigration reform.⁴ Highlights of its report entitled "The Contributions of New Americans in Utah," follow:

- Immigrants, both those who enter the country by legal means and those unauthorized to work and live in the U.S., contribute to the state in many ways.
- Foreign-born workers currently make up 11.1% of all entrepreneurs in the state, despite being just 8.6% of Utah's population.
- The estimated 250,000 immigrants living in Utah serve as everything from livestock workers to entrepreneurs, making critical contributions to Utah's economic success.
- Specifically, 13,280 immigrants in Utah are self-employed. Businesses owned by immigrants generated more than \$248 million in income and employed 31,224 people in the Beehive State in 2014.
- With more than \$5 billion a year in earnings and contributing one out of every thirteen tax dollars, immigrants play a key role as taxpayers and consumers.⁵

Clearly, Utah benefits from having immigrants in our midst. Allowing those who are undocumented to work legally would increase economic benefits as well as remove the continuing and constricting fear of separation and deportation for families.

Commendations:

- **The Partnership for a New American Economy** for their comprehensive and accessible study on immigrants in the United States and Utah
- **The gathering of Utah business, civic, and cultural leaders** to urge Congress to take action on immigration reform that coincided with the Partnership's release of "The Contributions of New Americans in Utah"

Recommendations:

- **Factual statistics on the contributions of immigrants** should be more widely disseminated to counteract the fear-mongering and false information of recent years.
- **Utah's freshly elected congressional delegation should support federal action** on comprehensive immigration reform in the new session of Congress.

Endnotes for Article 1 (Immigration)

¹ Adam Liptak and Michael Shear, "Supreme Court Tie Blocks Obama Immigration Plan," *New York Times*, June 23, 2016, accessed August 24, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/24/us/supreme-court-immigration-obama-dapa.html?_r=0.

² Ibid.

³ Mariah Noble, "Utah County Jail to End ICE Contract Due to Overcrowding," *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 17, 2016, accessed August 26, 2016, <http://www.sltrib.com/home/4244360-155/utah-county-jail-to-end-contract>.

⁴ Marjorie Cortez, "Report: Immigrant Labor, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Are Critical Components of Utah Economy," *Deseret News*, August 4, 2016, accessed August 16, 2016, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865659374/Report-Immigrant-labor-innovation-and-entrepreneurship-are-critical-components-of-Utah-economy.html?pg=all>.

⁵ "The Contributions of New Americans in Utah," *The Partnership for a New American Economy*, August 2016, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.renewoureconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/nae-ut-report.pdf>. For a recent article on trends in Utah and other states over the past seven years, see the report by Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "Size of U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Workers Stable After the Great Recession," November 3, 2016, *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*, accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/11/03/size-of-u-s-unauthorized-immigrant-workforce-stable-after-the-great-recession/>.