

Revitalizing the Golden State



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California is home to nearly 10 million immigrants, more than one quarter of the state’s population. Of those, 2.7 million are undocumented, and the vast majority of them have been living in the United States for more than 10 years. California’s immigrant contributions to the Golden State cannot be overstated. From Cesar Chavez, the pioneering agricultural labor-rights leader in the 20th century to Sergei Brin, the Russian entrepreneur behind one of the 21st century’s most revolutionary companies, Google Inc., the foreign born and their descendants are woven into the state’s cultural and economic fabric.

Still, that reality has not prevented some Californians, frustrated with our broken federal immigration system, to call for an Arizona-style “papers please” approach. The stated goal of this new wave of state-based enforcement legislation is to trigger a mass exodus of undocumented immigrants, by making “attrition through enforcement” the policy of state and local government agencies. The threshold question that proponents of S.B.1070-style legislation have failed to answer is whether that goal serves the economic interests of the state’s constituents.

The Center for American Progress and the Immigration Policy Center recently [released a report](#) [3] answering that question as it related to Arizona. Our analysis finds that the economic and fiscal consequences of widespread deportation for California and L.A. County would be even more devastating than in Arizona. The short-term shock to the state and county economies that would be immediately felt from a significant change in policy—deportation or legalization. Our analysis evaluates the changes in economic output, employment levels, and tax contributions on the economies of California and, more specifically, Los Angeles County arising from these divergent policy approaches.

This analysis demonstrates unequivocally that undocumented immigrants don’t simply “fill” jobs—they create jobs. Through the work they perform, the money they spend, and the taxes they pay, undocumented immigrants sustain the jobs of many other workers in the U.S. economy, immigrants and native-born alike.

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