

## GOVERNMENT

# Skip the Spin and Get the Facts on Immigration

The American Immigration Lawyers Association for NewsUSA

(NU) - Primary season is in full swing, and the candidates have everyone talking about immigration. As the campaign season rolls onward and the intensity of the rhetoric escalates, get the facts on five recurring myths, and clear the way for an honest immigration debate.

**Myth #1: A deportation-only policy will fix our immigration problems.** Deporting 12 million undocumented immigrants from the United States would cost an estimated \$230 billion and result in a shortage of 2.5 million workers, according to a 2005 study from the Center for American Progress. And, in addition to damaging families and industries, a deportation-only policy does not address the fundamental dysfunction of our immigration system.

**Myth #2: Immigrant workers suppress American wages.** An overwhelming majority of economists agree that immigrants actually increase economic productivity and the wages of American workers. Additionally, the White House Council of Economic Advisers concluded in a 2007 report that roughly 90 percent of native-born workers experience wage gains due to immigration, which total between \$30 billion and \$80 billion per year.

**Myth #3: The United States spends billions on welfare for undocumented immigrants.** Undocumented immigrants are not eligible to receive welfare benefits – ever. Even legal, permanent residents are severely limited when it comes to the benefits they can receive. They must pay into the Social Security and



**Amid the primaries, there are many myths floating around about immigration.**

Medicare systems for about 10 years before they are eligible to receive retirement benefits. Furthermore, the percentage of U.S.-born children of immigrants – documented and undocumented – who are eligible for federal assistance is declining.

**Myth #4: Undocumented immigrants are more likely to commit crimes than U.S. citizens.** A 2007 study by the University of California, Irvine, found that, among men ages 18-39 (who comprise the majority of the U.S. prison population), the incarceration rate for native-born citizens was 3.5 percent, five times higher than the rate for immigrants in 2000.

**Myth #5: Immigrants don't assimilate into U.S. society.** In states with a long tradition of immigration, such as California, it has been found that immigrants do learn English and climb the socio-economic ladder over time, with each successive generation closing the income and education gap between themselves and white, native-born Americans.

For more information on immigration policies, visit [www.aila.org](http://www.aila.org).