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The State of Immigration Reform

By Kristen Ellingboe and Anna Perina December 2015

Introduction and summary

It is no secret that the racial and ethnic makeup of the American electorate is changing rapidly. By the 2016 election, communities of color will make up 32 percent of all eligible voters in the United States.¹ This increasingly rapid demographic change means politicians at every level of government must address with public policy the challenges and opportunities facing all Americans.

One of these challenges is the need for comprehensive immigration reform. The majority of Americans—69 percent—think unauthorized immigrants who are living in the United States should be allowed to stay in the country, according to a recent CBS News and *New York Times* poll.² Yet congressional lawmakers have failed to move forward on comprehensive immigration reform. The failure of lawmakers to prioritize a long-term solution to the challenges facing the U.S. immigration system means that more than 11 million unauthorized immigrants are forced to stay on the economic sidelines while families continue to be separated.³

Instead of providing a sensible solution that would give unauthorized immigrants legal status and a pathway to citizenship—the progressive approach to immigration reform, which would boost the economy—the conservative response frequently demonizes and attempts to criminalize immigrants, all while predominantly opposing any positive action altogether.⁴

This report details the current state of immigration reform by laying out the problems facing the unauthorized immigrant community, outlining the conservative response to the immigration system, reviewing progressive solutions for reform, and providing a state-by-state breakdown of the economic impact of comprehensive immigration reform.

Our Mission

The Center for American Progress Action Fund is an independent, nonpartisan policy institute and advocacy organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans, through bold, progressive ideas, as well as strong leadership and concerted action. Our aim is not just to change the conversation, but to change the country.

Our Values

As progressives, we believe America should be a land of boundless opportunity, where people can climb the ladder of economic mobility. We believe we owe it to future generations to protect the planet and promote peace and shared global prosperity.

And we believe an effective government can earn the trust of the American people, champion the common good over narrow self-interest, and harness the strength of our diversity.

Our Approach

We develop new policy ideas, challenge the media to cover the issues that truly matter, and shape the national debate. With policy teams in major issue areas, The Center for American Progress Action Fund can think creatively at the cross-section of traditional boundaries to develop ideas for policymakers that lead to real change. By employing an extensive communications and outreach effort that we adapt to a rapidly changing media landscape, we move our ideas aggressively in the national policy debate.

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