The Immigration And Nationality Act

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Brief History

The Immigration Act that Congress passed in 1924 established the national-origin quotas. The Act allowed immigrants to receive immigration visas. The total number of immigrants awarded visas was two per cent of the population of each nationality residing in the U.S. by the 1890 census. The immigrants from Asia were excluded from the Act. World War I made people anxious, making a large population support the limits on immigration. The number of immigrants decreased, and by 1970, the number was 4.7 per cent of the total population, a 10 per cent fall when compared to 1910.

The Immigration and Nationality Act that Congress passed in 1965 changed the policy of immigration. It caused the elimination of the quotas based on nationality. The new policy favoured immigrants who wanted to join families residing in the United States and those who had the needed skills. As a result, immigration from Latin America and Asia increased. America allowed the entry of 1.3 million new immigrants in 2014, a figure higher than the 1.2 million in 2013. The number of immigrants from Canada was 41,100, from Mexico was 130,000, from China was 131,800 and 147,500 came from India. The population of immigrants today is similar to that of the late 19th century when the number of immigrants was close to 15 per cent of the United States residents. Most of the immigrants were from Canada, Germany, and Italy and had the skills needed to be in the United States, such as tailoring, shopkeeping, and stonemasonry. Twenty-seven per cent of the immigrants were skilled workers, while native-born Americans who were skilled workers were only 17 per cent.

Why Immigration Is An Issue

The illegal immigrants do not pay taxes, resulting in economic losses. Often, illegal immigrants do not pay taxes the same way as legitimate citizens. Surveys show that the majority of illegal immigrants do not pay state or federal income taxes, and they never intend to pay. Sometimes, they take advantage of the free benefits and social services being offered to them. An economic downfall or taxes can surge if more people are using resources than the money paid. The cost of education for illegal immigrants' children is very high. The recent data shows that the children of illegal immigrants constitute a substantial drain on local and state public funds. Most of the illegal immigrants' children were born in the U.S. and thus are United States citizens and attend public schools. The Supreme Court ruled that children who are United States residents are entitled to education in public schools regardless of being immigrants. Immigrant families with children receive more local and state services, especially education, than they pay in local and state taxes (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.).

Immigration causes insecurity in the United States. The influx of illegal immigrants into the United States affects national and legal security. When there is a population of people who are undocumented or have forged papers, the result is security problems. It is because the presence of a large number of undocumented immigrants distracts resources, distorts laws and effectively creates a cover for criminals and terrorists even though they do not pose direct security threats. The cost of terrorism to the economy can be huge as compared to the economic benefits of immigrants.

Illegal immigration can result in changes in the dynamics of employment. The wage levels in a free market economy depend on demand and supply. The wages usually go up if the market lacks skilled workers. The price of a product usually goes down when there is a lot of the same product. The job market usually has more workers when there is illegal migration into the country than it would have without them. More workers result in poor wages, meaning that there is a lower value of labor. Immigrants without college degrees are more likely to look for jobs in construction and agriculture. These areas will have lower wages; hence, native-born workers will leave their jobs to look for alternative jobs like sales (Legal Information Institute, n.d.).

Overcrowding usually results when there is illegal immigration. The population dynamics of an area can change rapidly as a result of illegal immigration. For instance, around 50 per cent of students who start school in California are either children of immigrants or immigrants. The added capacity of immigrant students causes overcrowding in the United States schools. Close to 15 per cent of United States schools exceed their capacity by 6 per cent.

The Expected Reasonable Outcome

The restriction of illegal immigration can have both positive and negative outcomes for the country. Immigration usually fuels the economy as a result of the added workforce, meaning that if immigration is reduced, GDP will fall. Most immigrants work in industries where there is a need for workers. Therefore, restrictions on immigration mean that those industries will lack enough personnel. The move can benefit Americans due to the increase in jobs in the positions that immigrants have occupied. The wages increase as labor supply decreases; thus, Americans will gain from the higher pricing of the value of work. The public is likely to start benefiting from the positive outcome in the labour market after one year. The level of insecurity will be reduced due to immigration restrictions. The potential terrorist criminals who take advantage of loopholes in immigration documentation will not have cover when strict policy removes the loopholes. However, reduction of insecurity may take a longer time, possibly five years.

Conclusions

Illegal immigration is a pressing issue in most of the developed countries, especially in the United States. It may adversely affect the security and stability of both the transit and destination countries if

not controlled. Illegal immigration is usually encouraged when immigration policies are not strict. The three branches of government play a leading role in formulating and enforcing policies for immigration. Illegal immigration causes more harm than benefit to the country; hence, good policies should be used for control (United Nations, 1948).

References

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