

Anti-Immigrant Arguments Against Immigration Reform

Since a bipartisan group of senators, known as the "Gang of Eight," introduced the Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 (also called the immigration reform bill S 744) on April 16, the anti-immigrant movement has worked to derail progress on the bill. Anti-immigrant groups have decried the bill in number of ways, claiming it will hurt American workers, weaken national security and lead to increases in "legal" immigration and an influx of cheap labor in the United States.

Claiming to be on the side of American workers

One of the anti-immigrant movement's main tactics in this immigration debate is claiming to take the side of the "American worker." Anti-immigrant groups assert that the unemployment rate is very high and as more immigrants become documented, the more they will compete for jobs with Americans. Historically, the anti-immigrant movement has attempted to co-opt issues and groups such as labor. The movement founded a front group called the Coalition for the Future American Worker in the 2000s, which was comprised of numerous anti-immigrant organizations. In the current battle to defeat immigration reform, the anti-immigrant movement is again targeting organized labor, like the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), claiming it does not represent the American worker because of the AFL-CIO's support of immigration reform. In an April 1 press release, Dan Stein, the president of the extreme anti-immigrant group Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) claimed, "The AFL-CIO has consistently failed to stand with American

workers...." The anti-immigrant movement asserts that the immigration reform bill is an assault on the American worker.

- In response to the introduction of the bill, Roy Beck, president of NumbersUSA, a grassroots anti-immigrant group that helped stop the 2007 immigration reform bill, stated on April 17 in a Bloomberg article, "We will be doing everything we can to help the 20 million unemployed Americans have a voice and be heard in this debate."
- William Gheen, the founder of the North Carolina-based anti-immigrant group Americans for Legal Immigration PAC (ALIPAC), wrote in an April 17 press release after the introduction of the bill, "We believe that this bill will hurt American workers, taxpayers, students, and voters by both destroying our future abilities to control our borders and by encouraging more illegal immigration into our suffering nation!"
- The Virginia-based anti-immigrant group Americans for Immigration Control (AIC) wrote the following in an email to supporters on April 18, "Also, on top of the amnesty is a massive increase in legal immigration and guest workers to take American jobs—this at a time when 20 million Americans can't find full-time employment."

Attacking "cheap labor"

In addition to its claim to be standing up for the "American worker," the anti-immigrant movement consistently targets the big business community for its support of immigration reform. After the introduction of the bill, many anti-immigrant groups spoke out against what they believe will be an influx of "cheap labor" into the job market. The attack on the big business community is an attempt to strengthen the movement's claims that it supports Americans who are unemployed and underemployed:

- Ira Mehlman, media director for the anti-immigrant group Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), claimed in an April 17 Bloomberg article, "Our goal is to make the American public aware that there's nothing

in it for them." Mehlman went on to argue that the bill contains "all sorts of goodies for people who broke our laws and people who want to hire cheap labor."

- Gayle Kesselman, head of the New Jersey-based anti-immigrant group New Jersey Citizens for Immigration Control (NJCIC), argued against "cheap labor" in an April 16 Washington Free Beacon article, stating, "Cheap labor is not cheap. Many do not have the equivalent of a high school education and are not literate in English. It's a huge cost in terms of social benefits. They go to the emergency room for health care. ... You can even make the case that we imported the health care crisis.";
- Dan Stein echoed his colleague Ira Mehlman's comments in an April 16 FAIR press release, arguing, "This legislation is all about satisfying the demands of illegal aliens and their advocates for amnesty and providing business interests access to low-wage foreign labor."

Focus on border security

The anti-immigrant movement also claims that the immigration reform bill's enforcement and border security measures should be implemented up front and not over a period of time. Many argue that providing undocumented immigrants with a pathway to citizenship will make our border less secure. By focusing on what they perceive as border security problems they have also tried to bridge immigration with the issue of terrorism:

- In an April 16 press release, Dan Stein argued, "Simply put, Congress has no business even introducing amnesty legislation until the Obama administration secures the border, sets forth clear and transparent metrics to measure its success, and demonstrates to the American people it is serious about enforcing our immigration laws across the country. Border security and the rule of law should not be held hostage to amnesty for illegal aliens."
- Rep. Lou Barletta (R-PA), a co-chair of FAIR's board of advisors, claimed the following in April 18 McClatchy article when asked for his opinion on the bill,

"We have immigration laws for two reasons. One, to protect our national security. Two, to protect American jobs. The proposal of the Senate Gang of Eight violates both of those principles. We'll make our borders less secure, and by offering a pathway to citizenship we encourage millions of people to rush to the United States to benefit from this proposal."

- In an April 24 blog for National Review Online, Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), claimed, "Last week's bombings were a bloody reminder that our immigration-security efforts leave much to be desired. And this bill either ignores many of those concerns, or makes them worse."

Pushing for limits on legal immigration

It is well-known that the anti-immigrant movement in the United States is opposed to undocumented immigration. It is less widely reported that the movement is also in favor of lowering the number of "legal" immigrants admitted into the country each year. FAIR takes this one step further, calling for a moratorium on all immigration to the United States. After the introduction of the immigration reform bill, many anti-immigrant groups argued that the bill would result in large increases in "legal" immigration:

- Ric Oberlink, a spokesperson for the Santa Barbara-based anti-immigrant group Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), told the Los Angeles Times on April 16, "When we have massive unemployment in the U.S., I don't think we need to be increasing immigration and bringing in people to take jobs when there are American citizens and legal immigrants who need jobs."
- NumbersUSA published an update on its website on April 16 alleging, "The bill could result in an additional 15 million green cards being issued in the first 10 years above and beyond the 1.1 million green cards that are currently issued each year. That would result in more than a 150% increase in legal immigration over the first decade after the bill's passage."

- On April 18, Joe Guzzardi, a senior writing fellow for CAPS, claimed in an article for GOPUSA.com, "As if granting legal status to aliens isn't bad enough, a preliminary analysis of the bill shows that legal immigration could increase by up to 100 percent. Current legal immigration totals about 1 million annually."