

New stats released on political, economic role of Ariz. immigrants

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On Thursday, the research and data-gathering Immigration Policy Center released an extensive report detailing the vast contributions of immigrants to the U.S. The enlightening report titled “Strength in Diversity” breaks down by each state the information gathered and also makes important nationwide conclusions.

Nationally, the IPC estimates that 12.5 percent of U.S.-Americans are immigrants, rising steadily from 7.9 percent in 1990. In total, there are over 40 million immigrants in the U.S. today. Former Mexicans make up the largest segment of this country’s immigrant population at nearly 30 percent. The vast majority of U.S. immigrants are authorized residents, with just 28 percent undocumented. And the report estimates that at least 4.5 million native born U.S. citizen minors in this country have at least one undocumented parent.

In addition, the statistics gathered by the IPC demonstrate the tremendous economic and political contributions made by immigrants to this country. Ten percent of all registered voters in the U.S. are naturalized immigrants or the U.S. citizen children of immigrants. More than 15 percent of all U.S. workers are foreign born, including 40 percent of our nation’s farming, fishing and forestry work force. And households headed by undocumented immigrants annually pay \$11.2 billion in state and federal taxes. The IPC concludes that if the nation’s undocumented population were to be completely expelled, the U.S. would lose \$551.6 billion in economic activity, \$245 billion in gross domestic product and 2.8 million jobs.

In Arizona, specifically, the IPC estimates that 13.4 percent of the state’s population or 856,663 state residents are immigrants. This is up from 7.6 percent in 1990.

The report details a variety of ways in which immigrants make important contributions to Arizona politics and economy. In total, 9.7 percent of registered voters in the state are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Foreign born individuals are estimated to account annually for \$10.2 billion in state economic output and generate state tax revenues of \$776 million. Immigrants account for 16.6 percent of the total workforce in the state, with undocumented individuals making up 7.4 percent of all Arizona workers. In addition, immigrant secondary education students in the state are estimated to pay annually \$243 million in tuition, fees and living expenses.

In compiling these statistics gathered from a variety of universities, government agencies and research organizations, the IPC states that it is attempting to illuminate the potential power held by, in particular, Latino and Asian immigrants to shape this country’s future. By demonstrating the tremendous influence the U.S. immigrant population has as a voting, consuming and laboring body, this report demonstrates the need to include this group more seriously in conversations regarding our collective national trajectory.

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