



Testimony of Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress
before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and
International Law
Hearing on Comprehensive Immigration Reform: Government Perspectives on Immigration
Statistics
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Thank you for inviting me here today. As you point out, I have a particular interest in the issue of immigration as the son of an immigrant as well as the grandson of immigrants. And as duly noted by Chairwoman Lofgren, Majority Whip Clyburn has appointed me as Chief Deputy Whip to work on this particular issue. Therefore, I am very happy to join you today and speak on this issue.

I strongly believe in comprehensive immigration reform and seem to have a more optimistic view of the contributions of immigrants to the United States economically. This must be about looking forward, not backwards – looking at where we are going to be in years to come, and not where we are today.

Today, I am not here to criticize the Senate bill in any way, as they are working through it as we speak. It is, however, my hope that the Senate passes a bill so that the House can take it up, pass its bill, and move to conference in order to get real, comprehensive immigration reform passed.

As I testify before you today, I would like to highlight the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Cost Estimate report which shows that comprehensive immigration reform is essential to the growth of our economy.

It is imperative that we pass a Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill this year in order to secure our borders, sustain a strong economic future in the United States, and ensure that our country remain a haven for those who seek freedom, opportunity, and a better life for themselves and for their families.

Immigration does not necessarily have to be a drain on the economy, as many would have you believe. Immigrants are not a drain on tax payers and the economy. In fact, they improve many aspects of our economy: adding to job creation, increasing our national revenue through greater receipts of Social Security payroll taxes, which are classified as off-budget.

Look at the jobs they fill, the money they spend, and the jobs they create. They are essential to our nation's future prosperity. As Leon Sequiera, Assistant Secretary for Policy for the U.S. Department of Labor stated, "Everyone who comes to America as an immigrant gets a job, but that doesn't mean they necessarily displace someone else in the marketplace. They may take a job that, in turn, leads to the creation of a job or two or three jobs." We have an expanding marketplace and an economy that continues to grow.

The growth of the foreign-born workforce has not produced significant adverse effects on native-born workers. Unemployment rates for all groups have gone down and wages have increased. As Mr. Sequiera pointed out, there are 4.1 million job openings in the United States, with new job vacancies opening faster than they are being filled.

At the Summit on Retirement Savings hosted by the United States Department of Labor, Alan Greenspan, the former Federal Reserve Board Chairman stated, "The larger our workforce is in the year 2010 and beyond, the easier producing goods and services for both retirees and active workers will be. Immigration policy will therefore be a key component of baby-boom retirement policy."

For example, people are not joining the workforce at the same rate as they were in the 1950s, the Baby-boom era. Economically, passing comprehensive immigration reform is essential because it will allow more individuals to join the workforce, thereby adding to our economy and the benefits we all enjoy.

This year, it was widely reported that undocumented immigrants in New York and throughout the nation filed taxes returns in record numbers to start a paper trail with the prospect of Congress overhauling our immigration system. This only proves that comprehensive immigration reform holds the promise of getting more individuals, even those without official documentation, to voluntarily pay into the system rather than remain invisible outside of it.

Undocumented immigrant workers already pay an estimated \$7 billion into the Social Security system. There can be no better incentive than a common-sense immigration policy to encourage more individuals to pay taxes in the hope of getting a foothold in the climb towards naturalization. Granted, I agree that some of the undocumented workers today are paid off the books. Some use false Social Security numbers or false taxpayer I.D. numbers to pay into a system that they will not necessarily get a benefit from in the

future. It has yet to be determined how we compensate the undocumented individuals in the United States who have already contributed toward the Social Security system.

Additionally, immigration will be the primary source of new skilled workers for the manufacturing sector – filling 10 million new jobs by the year 2010. An inadequate labor force would accelerate the transfer of American productive capacity and well-paid manufacturing jobs overseas. Regardless of what Lou Dobbs says, he does not speak in facts, but peddles fear.

Look at my district, for instance. Look at my city. It is full of foreign corporations who hire Americans and assimilating immigrants alike. All of these corporations have been beneficial to our economy. As Alan Greenspan stated, "Failure to attract enough labor through immigration will result in lower gross domestic production growth by at least 3 percent in 10 years and at least 17 percent in 30 years. Immigrants were crucial to the job and labor force growth in the 1990s. Furthermore, the "New Economy" of the last decade was overwhelmingly dependent on male immigrant workers."

So in the end, Madam Chair, I applaud the work that you are doing in attempting to develop a comprehensive immigration reform bill - one that takes into account the integrity of our borders and the need to end illegal immigration as we know it today. And doing so with a practical approach that will improve the economy of the United States, the lives of the millions who are undocumented here today, who want nothing more than a better way of life for themselves, their families, and for all Americans.