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Introduction

In November 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 was signed into law. This legislation represented a new approach on the part of the United States to control immigration, particularly illegal immigration. To deter illegal migration, the Act authorized an increase in border enforcement and made it illegal for an employer to knowingly hire an alien who does not have permission to work in this country. These enforcement measures were balanced with programs that legalized the status of illegal aliens who entered the country prior to January 1, 1982, or who worked as agricultural laborers for at least 90 days in specific perishable commodities during the May 1985 through May 1986 period.

While IRCA is best known for these measures dealing with illegal immigration, it contained a number of other provisions, including major reporting requirements on the implementation and impact of IRCA and other aspect of immigration. The most comprehensive of these requirements is a triennial report on immigration mandated in Section 401. Beginning in January 1989 and continuing every third year thereafter, a comprehensive report on the impact of immigration is required to be submitted to the Congress. Each report must provide the following for the preceding 3-year period and project it for the succeeding 5-year period:

1. The number and classification of aliens admitted (whether as immediate relatives, special immigrants, refugees, under the preference classification, or as nonimmigrants), paroled, or granted asylum during the relevant period.
2. A reasonable estimate of the number of aliens who entered the United States during the period without visas or who became deportable during the period under Section 241 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).
3. A description of the impact of admissions and other entries of immigrants, refugees, asylees, and parolees into the United States during the reporting period on the economy, labor, and housing markets; the education system; social services; foreign policy; environmental quality and resources; the rate, size, and distribution of population growth in the United States; and the impact on specific States and local units of government with high rates of immigration resettlement.

The report may also include recommendations on changes in numerical limitation or other policies under Title II of the INA encompassing the admission and entry of aliens to the United States.

The inclusion of Section 401 within IRCA reflects the belief on the part of Congress in the need to examine, comprehensively and on a regular basis, the increasingly complex issue of the effect of immigration on the United States.

Responsibility for the Triennial Report

The lead responsibility for the development and production of the report was given to the Attorney General in coordination with the Secretary of Labor by Executive Order on February 10, 1992. On behalf of the Attorney General, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) contacted the other Federal agencies whose responsibilities fall in the areas to be addressed in this report. The Departments of State (DOS), Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (DHHS), Agriculture (USDA), Education (DOEd), Commerce (DOC), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as well as the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) were requested to prepare sections for the report. Each agency was asked to provide descriptive material covering Federal fiscal years 1995 through 1997 and, if possible, projections covering the next 5 years through 2002.

These agencies differ widely in their responsibility for immigration and immigrants, and their ability to provide information concerning the impact of immigration on their program areas also varies. This edition of the Triennial Report includes sections discussing the impact of immigration on the education system (DOEd), social services (DHHS, SSA, and USDA), international monetary flows (DOC), foreign policy (DOS), and the population of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau). The INS prepared a section on the number of aliens admitted in, categories, and location of aliens in the United States. The INS also compiled the sections contributed by the other agencies and prepared brief introductions to selected sections.

Coverage, Content, and Organization of the Triennial Report

This comprehensive report on immigration contains, as required, information on all major categories of immigration and material addressing the effect of immigration on a wide variety of subject areas. The material is organized by subject matter area into the following four parts:

Part I, Population Impacts, addresses the contribution of immigration to U.S. population growth, with material prepared by the INS and the U.S. Census Bureau. Chapter 1, International Migration to the United States, defines and examines various immigrant and nonimmigrant categories. Included are projected immigration levels by category for fiscal years (FYs) 1998-2002, along with data on the number of immigrants and those in other significant categories who entered the country during FYs 1995-1997. The primary focus of this chapter is on lawful, permanent migration, but it also includes estimates of the number of aliens who enter without visas or who arrive with nonimmigrant visas and fail to depart before the visa expires. Estimates of the rate of emigration of legal permanent residents from the United States are also included. Chapter 2, International Migration and Population Change in the United States, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau, presents data on the growth of the total U.S. population and its foreign-born component beginning with the 1990 census and updated through 1997. The projections of population growth extend through 2002. The updates and projections employ data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. These data sources are also used to provide information on the impact of the interstate migration of foreign-born and U.S.-born persons on state population growth.

Part II, Education and Social Services Impacts, describes social service programs with an emphasis on the extent to which they serve immigrants; with chapters prepared by DOEd, DHHS, SSA, and the USDA. These chapters pay particular attention to the changes wrought in their programs by the 1996 amendments to the immigration and welfare laws.

Part III, International Impacts, addresses the international impact of immigration, with Chapter 5, Selected Economic Impacts of International Migration, prepared by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (DOC), and Chapter 6, The Foreign Policy Impact of Immigration, by the Department of State.

For the issue areas of the labor market, the housing market, and environmental quality, no specific material is included because the relevant Federal agencies could not provide sufficient information to support such a discussion.

Each major section of the report is introduced by a cover page that contains an abstract of the material presented, as well as the name and mailing address of the agency or agencies responsible for the preparation of the section. Tables of contents are provided for all chapters.

As mentioned previously, 5-year projections have been included for expected immigration as well as for the total U.S. population. However, for topic areas such as foreign policy, education, and social services, 5-year projections could not reliably be made.

The report does not examine in detail the special programs created by the enactment of IRCA or the specific impacts of those programs. These programs have been discussed and analyzed in other reports mandated by IRCA, including state legalization impact assistance grants, the legalization and special agricultural worker programs, and employer sanctions.

Finally, where appropriate, the report includes discussions regarding promising avenues for future research and data collection. Recommendations regarding changes to Title II of the INA are not made in this report.

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