

## IMMIGRATION CONSENSUS ISSUES

The LWV-Wake Immigration Committee chaired by Lisa Mowat developed the following list of pros and cons plus some initial priorities regarding the LWVUS Immigration Study Consensus.

**As a League we will be asked to rate each part of questions 1-4 as either:**

**HIGH PRIORITY      LOWER PRIORITY      DISAGREE      NO CONSENSUS**

**Question 1: Federal immigration laws should take into consideration criteria such as the following:**

1(a) Ethnic and Cultural diversity:

Pros – Enriches our culture, brings in new ideas, skills and languages good for global economy, increases our professional pool.

Cons – Expenses for services, fosters prejudice, problems with keeping English as the official US language, governmental agencies have to provide translators.

1(b) Economic, Business and Service Employment needs:

Pros – Work useful to the US would be done (high tech, teachers, laborers), immigrants spend money on goods, sales and other taxes.

Cons – Higher bills for health, education and police, lower wages for current residents.

1(c) Environmental Impact/Sustainability:

Pros – None

Cons – Misuse of pesticides, the need for an overall population cap because of need for more water, schools, roads, trash, services, prisons.

1(d) Family Reunification of Authorized Immigrants and Citizens with Spouses and Minor Children:

Pros – Primary wage earner more productive, less crime, money stays in Wake County, more likely to stay if have a family here, humanitarian. It should be limited to the nuclear family.

Cons – Too many family members brought in, limits other skilled workers who can come in, increased pressure on schools.

1(e) History of Criminal Activity:

Pros – Protection of residents, prison space and cost.

Cons – Documentation could be hard to find or can be “iffy”, language could be a problem with understanding legal options in an arrest.

1(f) Humanitarian Crisis/Political Persecution in Home Countries:

Pros – We are already doing this and it is working, consistent with US citizens stated values toward others at risk.

Cons – Loophole for easier immigration, can be hard for immigrant to prove risk.

1(g) Immigrant Characteristics (health and age):

Pros – Brings healthy residents, keeps out communicable diseases.

Cons – Might not be able to work and therefore put a burden on services, keeps family from reunification.

NOTE:

There are three aspects to the immigration issue: people immigrate to become citizens, people come in as workers and stay, and people come in as visitors and overstay.

- 1(h) Rights of All Workers to Safe Working Conditions and Liveable Wage:  
 Pros – Makes work in the US more attractive; it's a moral responsibility to keep people safe; keeps a happier, healthier workforce; workforce more productive and create better products; immigrants will tell their family so expectations of good work conditions might be generated in their home countries.  
 Cons – More accidents at work make for more health needs; capitalist systems means businesses make profits and this would cut into profits; it would increase prices of commodities; companies will just take factories overseas; OSHA is under funded; there is no real protection for whistle blowers.
- 1(i) Rights of Families to Remain Together:  
 Pros – It is a benefit for the children, the family and society- especially if some members of the family are US citizens; maintain sense of own identity with family support; families don't lose income and benefits from work of the deported family member; there is an additional stress to keep families together if one providing member is deported; enables stable families which makes a better workforce.  
 Cons – Confusion about what is a family; encourages undocumented immigrants to marry US citizens; wait for immigration is so long that some children age out of eligibility (by becoming 18) and get left behind; encourages more immigration by spouse and children to join their family in the US.
- 1(j) Rights of all Individuals in U.S. to Fair Treatment Under the Law (Fair Hearing, Right to Counsel, Right of Appeal and Humane Treatment:  
 Pros – It is a moral responsibility; the law of the land.  
 Cons – Employees freer to sue employers; need for translators in court.
- 1(k) Education and Training:  
 Pros – Encourages a skilled and employable workforce; is a brain gain for US workforce if immigrants are highly skilled.  
 Cons – Accelerates brain drain for other countries.

**Question 2: Unauthorized immigrants currently in the U.S. should be treated as follows:**

- 2(a) Deport Unauthorized Immigrants:  
 Pros – Wages would increase as labor force decreases; companies would have to improve working conditions.  
 Cons – Can't find all unauthorized immigrants and the effort would cost too much money; economy would collapse; companies would lose reliable, cheap workforce.
- 2(b) Some Deported/Some Allowed to Earn Legal Adjustment of Status Based on Length of Residence in U.S.:  
 Pros – More assimilated.  
 Cons – Would lose younger (probably healthier, more productive) portion of work force; cost of finding the unauthorized immigrants not allowed to stay and shipping them home.
- 2(c) Some Deported/Some Allowed to Earn Legal Adjustment of Status Based on Needs of U.S. Employers:  
 Pros – Companies would get the work force they need.  
 Cons - Encourages employers to flaunt the system, because if they can get undocumented workers to the US they would then get to keep them; those on the waiting list in other countries should get 1<sup>st</sup> priority; is a disincentive for people to immigrate the legal way.

**NOTE:**

Requirements for an application for citizenship: must be 18 years old or older; be a resident for five (5) years or more; be lawful; be able to read, write and speak English.

- 2(d) All Allowed to Earn Legal Adjustment of Status by Doing Things Such as Paying Taxes, Learning English, Studying Civics, Etc.:  
 Pros – If people are already here they should be given a chance to become legal; benefits the community to have more educated residents and citizens; affordable solution; those here would get employee rights because they won't be paid under the table; encourages a legal employment industry.  
 Cons – Costs to Wake County associated with assimilation; opens the flood gate to undocumented immigrants; recently documented immigrants will apply to get their tax refunds back.
- 2(e) If Deported, Assess Fines Before Possible Re-Entry:  
 Pros – None  
 Cons – It is impossible for undocumented immigrants to come up with money for the fines.
- 2(f) Assess Fines Before Allowed to Earn Legal Adjustment of Status:  
 Pros –  
 Cons – Fines would need to be reasonable; do we want to perpetuate indentured service; paying taxes should be in lieu of fines.

NOTE:

In 2004, The Pew Center estimated that there were 605,000 immigrants in North Carolina. Of these 300,000 were undocumented. The estimate in 2006 was 614,000.

**Question 3: Federal immigration laws should provide an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry into the U.S for immigrants who are:**

- 3(a) Immediate Family Members Joining Family Member Already Admitted for Legal Permanent Residence in the U.S.  
 Pros – Family reunification; family is moral entity so it is a moral imperative; strengthening of family (What is a family? Mother, Father, children eligible as of their application date); better economically if reunification time is lower as the family member here is not really part of the culture left behind or the one here, and there is no family here).  
 Cons – As accept immigrants from more cultures the family definition is quite different; expenses to bringing more family in who might not be able to contribute to the work force (children, elderly).
- 3(b) Entering the U.S. to Meet Labor Needs:  
 Pros – There will be a population growth to take care of future labor needs (economy is growing and retirees need care); U.S. will need 65 million new workers by 2030; labor force is flexible in its needs.  
 Cons – Businesses shouldn't determine immigration policy; taking jobs away from African Americans and other low income citizens; massive cultural adjustments required to handle new immigrants.
- 3(c) Entering the U.S. as Students:  
 Pros – Brings highly trained people; people schooled here tend to stay; students enrich our knowledge by their different training in their home country; they start new businesses; they can influence their own countries about the U.S.  
 Cons – Brain drain from other countries; they become illegal.
- 3(d) Entering the U.S. because of Persecution in Home Country:  
 Pros – Morally right; we often create the problems that we are then obligated to solve.  
 Cons – Immigration can be skewed by wealth or sponsoring organizations; expensive or hard to prove persecution.

**Question 4: In order to deal more effectively with unauthorized immigrants, Federal immigration law should include:**

- 4(a) Social Security Card or Other National Identification Card with Secure Identifiers for All Persons Residing in the U.S.:  
Pro – Can track everyone; can replace the fake IDs with something that means something.  
Con – Easy to fake; government is not perceived as trustworthy enough to use this in a beneficent way.
- 4(b) Federal immigration law dealing with unauthorized immigrants should be enforced by including:
- (i) Physical Barriers (such as Fences) and Surveillance at Borders: DISAGREE
  - (ii) Increased Personnel at Land, Air, and Sea Entry Points: HIGH PRIORITY
  - (iii) All Allowed to Earn Legal Adjustment of Status by Doing Things Such as Paying Taxes, Learning English, Studying Civics, Etc.: LOW PRIORITY
  - (iv) Verification Documents, such as Green Cards and Work Permits with Secure Identifiers: LOW PRIORITY
  - (v) Improved Technology to Facilitate Employer Verification of Employee Visa Status: HIGH PRIORITY
  - (vi) Improved Technology for Sharing Information Among Federal Agencies: HIGH PRIORITY, WITH CONSTRAINTS
  - (vii) A Program to Allow Immigrant Workers to Go in and Out of the U.S. to Meet Seasonal and Sporadic Labor Needs: HIGH PRIORITY (best solution)
  - (viii) Significant Fines Proportionate to Revenue for Employers who Fail to Take Adequate Steps to Verify Work Authorization of Employees: DISAGREE

COMMENT: Employers shouldn't do policing. They can say to a prospective employee: "There is a problem. I can't hire you until the ID problem is straightened out."

**Question 5: Federal immigration law should address and balance the long-term federal financial benefit from immigrants with the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.**

CONSENSUS

NO CONSENSUS

**Question 6: Federal immigration law should be coordinated with U.S. foreign policy to proactively help improve economies, education and job opportunities, and living conditions of nations with large emigrating populations.**

CONSENSUS

NO CONSENSUS

**Question 7: If desired, add brief comments (limited to 150 words).**

NOTE:

For additional information, go the LWVUS Web site at <http://www.lwv.org/> and click on "Follow Our Study and Get Educated."