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Study Reveals the High Cost of Immigration to New York State

By Wayne Lutton

Legal and illegal immigration is costing New Yorkers a minimum of \$5.6 billion annually, a new study confirms. *Our Teeming Shore: A Legislative Report on the Impact of U.S. Immigration Policy on New York State* was prepared under the direction of State Senator Frank Padavan (R-Queens), the chairman of the State Senate Committee on Cities.

The Padavan Report is the first time an attempt has been made to assess the cost of immigration to New York's taxpayers. The result of a year's research, including hearings held in New York City, the Committee on Cities focused on the fiscal impact of immigration in five policy areas: social services, criminal justice, education, housing, and employment and the economy. To arrive at an estimate of the cost of immigration, Senator Padavan calculated the spending on behalf of immigrants by using the percentage of foreign-born residents compared with total state funding for education, welfare, and prisons. He then subtracted from the total the amount the state receives in federal reimbursements. Senator Padavan emphasized that his estimates are very conservative because they do not take into account the fact that post-1965 immigrants constitute a disproportionate share of the state's welfare and criminal populations.

"...post-1965 immigrants constitute a disproportionate share of [NY] state's welfare and criminal populations."

New York state is home to 20 percent or more of the U.S.'s total immigrant population. Nearly 500,000 illegal immigrants are believed to be in the state — with some 400,000 or more living in the New York metropolitan area. One-third of New York

City's population is foreign born, a higher percentage than during the great waves of immigration at the turn of the century.

Attracted by generous social welfare programs, which aliens are often actively encouraged to apply for, the state has become a destination of preference for newcomers to America. During the 1980s, eight percent of the population of Guyana moved to New York City. Countries with over half of their total U.S. illegal alien population residing in NY State include: Senegal (88.9%); St. Vincent (74.6%); Grenada (73.6%); Antigua (67.8%); Bangladesh (67%); Guyana (66.9%); Yemen (66.7%); Barbados (64.3%); Netherlands Antilles (60%); Malta (60%); Sri Lanka (57.4%); St. Lucia (55.9%); Red China (52.5%); Ecuador (50.8%); Trinidad & Tobago (50.4%); Dominican Republic (50.4%).

The major findings disclosed in the *Report* include the following:

Welfare: Estimated cost — \$2.09 billion. A state Department of Social Services survey revealed that one of every three public assistance applicants in NY state is foreign born.

Crime: Estimated cost — \$269.84 million. Twelve percent of the state's prison population is foreign-born. From 1985 to 1992, the number of foreign-born inmates climbed at more than twice the rate as U.S.-born citizens. And foreign-born inmates are more likely to be convicted of drug offenses and more serious offenses than inmates born in the United States. While foreign-born inmates come from 111 countries around the world, 29 percent of the total are from the Dominican Republic alone.

Education: Estimated cost — \$3.27 billion. Immigrants make up 13.5 percent of NY City's public school population and the city Board of Education needs to spend over \$1 billion to construct additional classrooms for immigrant students.

The Committee on Cities offered a list of

twenty-one policy recommendations to deal with the problems associated with immigration, including measures to deport illegal aliens convicted of felonies; deportation of aliens who cannot justify their claim for political asylum; the repeal of laws prohibiting social welfare agencies from giving the names of aliens to the INS and other law enforcement agencies; endorsement of a moratorium on new immigration into the U.S. "until the scope of immigration's impact on our country is sufficiently understood," followed by a fixed, and sharply reduced, ceiling on total admissions.

In his introduction to the *Report*, Senator Padavan remarked,

American policy on immigration is in disarray...

It seems inevitable that whenever America's policy on immigration is analyzed, the words of Emma Lazarus ring in the ear — "Give me your tired your poor; / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...."

These words, inscribed on the Statue of

Liberty in New York Harbor, may today be an anthem to billions, but forgotten is the fact that they were chiseled into our national conscience before the first shot was fired at the Battle of Wounded Knee; before the Panama Canal was dug and before Thomas A. Edison invented the movies...

The world has changed. America has changed. As New York State Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol noted, "the society that they encounter today is very different than that which absorbed the immigrants of decades past. The factories and farms that offered good jobs to people with strong backs and a willingness to work are largely a distant memory."

Senator Padavan is to be commended for initiating this investigation. Failure to collect hard evidence has hindered efforts to reform immigration policy. Other states need to establish commissions to gather information regarding immigration-related issues. ■



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County Programs Assist Illegal Aliens in Settling in the U.S.

By Robert Denny

Hubert Humphrey once said, "just because we're liberals doesn't mean we have to be damn fools."

That legend should be carved over every government doorway in Montgomery County. Where our Department of Family Resources is concerned, it should be carved into the doors and desks.

On second thought, the next county executive should simply shut down the department and compress the other five social service departments and commissions into one, with far fewer bureaucrats.

As one insider said, DFR "is an agency in search of a mission." It has found a lot of silly ones in recent years, among them trying to match social service deliveries with master-plan road boundaries and spending taxpayer money on telling people how to grow flowers, manage stress, make "life decisions," and (I'm not kidding) encouraging people to talk more at the dinner table.

DFR's latest folly is aiding and abetting an illegal and probably criminal activity.

As *The Journal* reported last week, DFR has spent \$299,000 to buy a house near Piney Branch Road and University Boulevard in Silver Spring (and plans to spend another \$300,000 expanding it) to provide a center for jobless Hispanic immigrants.

One DFR employee, Walter Wolfe, even said proudly that "this corner is known in El Salvador" — which explains why so many immigrants are flocking here.

DFR has given a \$60,000 contract to an outfit called CASA, which told *The Journal* that, while half or more of its "clients" are illegal aliens, "it's more important to get them a job." DFR also has hired a Hispanic to "work the corner."

I asked Charles Short, DFR's director, about all of this, and he said that DFR is simply making job "referrals" for aliens. I asked him how he could do this as it's a violation of federal law to employ

illegal aliens. Isn't referring them to an employer aiding and abetting an illegal activity?

He said he didn't think so.

It would help if he read the law.

Under Section 274 of the U.S. Code, it's a criminal offense punishable by five years in prison to encourage an illegal alien to come to or reside in the United States, or to harbor him or her or to transport the alien in a vehicle. Any (county or private) vehicle so used can be confiscated without a warrant.

Under Section 274A, it's unlawful "for a person or their entity to hire, or to recruit, or refer for a fee, for employment in the United States" or to enter into a contract "to obtain the labor of an alien...."

Isn't paying someone else \$60,000 to do it "referring for a fee?" Even if it skirts the law (others will decide that), isn't it a highly dubious thing for a public official to do?

It gets worse. Illegality is just the tip of a huge iceberg.

County Executive Neal Potter recently revealed that an estimated \$3.5 million of taxpayer money is being spent each year on health services for illegal aliens.

The money is being spent in three health department divisions: communicable diseases (21 cases of AIDS, 20 dysentery, and 2,388 possible tuberculosis cases); family health (pregnant Hispanic women, family planning, child health, immunization); and school health services (5 percent of our students are assumed to be illegals).

Meantime, canny young married couples are moving into Frederick and other counties rather than Montgomery to avoid our taxes, and many of our deeply rooted 110,000 seniors whose incomes are \$15,000 under the county household median and whose earnings from modest investments are falling are wondering where to move.

The problem isn't simply local.