

Senator Jeff Sessions
Questions for the Record
Janet Murguía, President and CEO, National Council of La Raza

Question: If S. 744 were to become law, do you believe that the Department of Homeland Security would deport those who enter the country illegally or overstay their visas after the bill's enactment?

NCLR Response:

Yes. In the last several years, deportations have risen and remain at record levels, measured in both absolute and relative terms. The additional investments and technological upgrades in immigration enforcement included in S. 744, if properly implemented, would give us reason to expect that immigration law enforcement not only will continue, but will be smarter and more effective in the future.

Question: If S. 744 were to become law, how many total new immigrants, including those currently here illegally who would be granted some form of legal status and those who would be admitted to the country under all categories of chain migration, would be added to the United States over a ten-year period following the date of enactment and over a fifteen-year period following the date of enactment?

NCLR Response:

To begin with, we would like to correct some misconceptions included in the question: First, neither the current undocumented population nor those already in line for visas would constitute “new” immigrants to this country. In the first case, one of the major catalysts for reform is the fact that the undocumented are already here, and many have been for years, working, raising families, and, in other ways, becoming part of American society. In the latter case, S. 744 would simply reduce the unconscionably long wait times for many of those who apply to reunite with their closest family members.

Second, “chain migration” is not a fact but a pejorative term used by opponents of legal immigration to denigrate and grossly exaggerate the impact of legal family immigration, a bedrock principle of our immigration system. As noted above, the process for reuniting with families is both quite arduous and prolonged. It can, and does, take years for qualified applicants to receive a visa and in the vast majority of cases, if and only if they meet certain eligibility requirements, demonstrate they can support themselves, and a family member also legally commits to supporting them. The idea that this process is either quick or easy is refuted by the considerable backlogs in many categories that S. 744 seeks to remedy.

As for the effect of S.744 on new immigrant entries, both authorized and unauthorized, there are a number of agencies and research organizations working on this but we would point the committee to the Center for American Progress (CAP), whose highly respected policy analysts have produced a series of estimates, summarized below, comparing net levels of immigration

with and without enactment of S. 744. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) believes it represents a credible, informed estimate of future immigration levels under either scenario. In short, CAP estimates that the legislation may result in a net annual decrease of 151,200 (see Chart 1 below). Current levels are calculated at 1.74 million, while new entries are estimated to be 1.59 million. One of the most significant impacts is on the levels of unauthorized immigration, which will be reduced by about 90%.¹

Chart 1. Center for American Progress

The Senate immigration reform bill will actually reduce the number of people entering the country		
Category	Current	Future¹
Uncapped employment visas ²	N/A	218,000
Capped employment visas	140,000	150,000 ³
Merit-based visas ⁴	N/A	185,000
Uncapped immediate relatives of U.S. citizens ⁵	470,000	470,000
Uncapped immediate relatives of legal permanent residents (green card holders) ⁶	N/A	170,000
Capped family visas	226,000	161,000
Diversity visas	50,000	0
Refugees, asylees, and "other" ⁷	169,000	169,000
Subtotal	1,055,000	1,523,000
<i>Average unauthorized entry</i>	<i>688,000⁸</i>	<i>68,800⁹</i>
Total	1,743,000	1,591,800
Net new immigrants under S. 744		-151,200

Note: Estimates rounded to the nearest thousand.

¹ Center for American Progress, *Current and Estimated Future Immigration Based on S. 744*. April 30, 2013, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2013/04/30/61942/current-and-estimated-future-immigration-based-on-the-senates-immigration-reform-bill/>