

Aging Citizens for American Protectionism (ACAP)

You are the lead analyst and lobbyist for Aging Citizens for American Protectionism (ACAP). ACAP is an organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of elderly Americans. In addition to actively lobbying Congress to support legislation that benefits America's elderly, ACAP contributes significant research in the areas of aging, health, and retirement in America.

Research points to an emerging problem of economic uncertainty in caring for America's aging and retired population. As immigrants flood into the U.S., the Social Security network and financial resources are spread thinner and thinner across growing numbers of "deserving" people. Retirement trends point to an even more complex issue—by 2030 the number of people over the age of 65 will increase from 40 million to 69 million and, at the same time, America's work force will shrink considerably. These are not sustainable numbers, and as America ages, Congress will be required to make difficult choices about its financial obligations and policies. It will be your job to keep the "elderly agenda" on the forefront of the Congressional agenda, and to make sure American retirees have a chance to enjoy the benefits they feel they have earned.

Because of ACAP's leadership and interest in the role of immigration in support for the elderly, you have been invited to join this Blue Ribbon Commission on Immigration-Related Costs and Benefits, set up by the President and Congress. Your organization has chosen you to be its representative, and together you have come up with the following main ideas to share on the first day of the meeting.

ACAP research has convinced you of the following:

- Social Security payments will see you safely through your retirement, but your children may have to compete against immigrants for limited Social Security dollars. Clearly, the immigrant pool is tapping into a Social Security system that will soon be insolvent given the current population growth in the U.S.
- Many immigrants enter the U.S. at an advanced age and impose financial burdens upon the medical and Social Security system that were not offset by earlier tax contributions.
- The strength of the U.S. economy is threatened by immigration. The U.S. already exports millions of service and manufacturing jobs overseas. New immigrants take many of the remaining jobs that might otherwise go to "long-standing" American citizens.



What follows is more detail about your thoughts on these subjects.

Immigration and the costs of supporting America's elderly

Clearly, changes must be made to U.S. immigration policy in order to protect and financially support the hardworking Americans now entering retirement. Immigration is the primary contributing factor to America's rapidly increasing population, and in many cases immigrant families include more than one elderly dependent as well as multiple dependent children. Moreover, research shows that elderly immigrants enter the United States expecting more of a handout than a hand-up. In fact, immigrants entering the U.S. at an advanced age impose burdens on the medical and Social Security systems that they do not offset with earlier tax contributions. What results is an economic imbalance and increased burden on the American taxpayer, and a loss of benefits for the American retiree.

It's true that, without immigration, the demographic shift to an older population would be more striking. However, even if increased immigration increases the worker-to-retiree ratio, this does not account for the high public burden of services for their children. Their actual impact on the "dependency ratio"—the number of people in dependent age groups (under 15 and over 65) compared to the working-age population—would be small. In addition, the prospects are risky. Many immigrants do not graduate from high school or college and therefore are more likely to generate a net cost to the government higher than the tax benefits they provide. Because of the high poverty rates and low skill levels of many immigrants, the burden on the government is actually increased, depleting the Social Security Trust Fund in the long run.



Policy proposals

Your fear that current immigration levels are depleting the Social Security coffers and changing America's social landscape makes the upcoming forum a critical event for you to voice your organization's beliefs that the United States must:

1. adopt a new immigration policy aimed at limiting population growth to 250,000 new immigrants per year, of which only 50,000 can be over the age of 50;
2. devise a systematic evaluation process and subsequent policy to allow a greater percentage of immigrants who will substantially contribute to the economic growth of the United States; and
3. reduce incentives for people to come to the United States by agreeing to a limited Social Security package for immigrants and granting automatic U.S. citizenship only to offspring of immigrants, not to extended family.

Restructure immigration policy. Congress should consider reframing its immigration policies to help stabilize the growing population of elderly Americans. It might be beneficial, for example, to impose two sets of quotas upon immigrants, one that caps the yearly total of immigrants and another that limits immigrants of certain age brackets from entering the country. They might also consider developing conditions under which unproductive immigrants who have not contributed to the system cannot receive

benefits. After decades of hard work, the retiring “Boomer” generation deserves the rewards entitled to them and should not see their resources stripped by immigrants who have not contributed to the financial, intellectual, or physical capital of this country.

Socioeconomic contribution evaluation. Most immigrants are poor; indeed, that is why they come to the United States. Through present immigration policy, over one million mostly poor people are admitted into society every year, a society that is already challenged to deal with the poverty of its current citizens. The United States should therefore pursue a policy to grant preferential citizenship to immigrants who are most likely to contribute to the financial growth of the country, by evaluating educational background and applied skills. There is a greater likelihood that these immigrants will productively contribute to the country’s labor base.

Limited Social Security package. The burden placed on the Social Security system by immigrants threatens its sustainability. What many American’s worked long and hard for—the assurance that their retirement will be sustained by their investment—is being depleted by immigrants who enter the U.S. at an advanced age and tap into the Social Security network without having first contributed through taxes. Limiting the extend to which these immigrants can be eligible for Social Security will help ensure the program is sustained and available for those who deserve it most.

Finally, Americans today are losing hold of their American heritage. As the population ages but the birthrate flattens, the “new” American family will more likely hail from India than Indiana, or Mexico rather than New Mexico. As a result, stories and oral histories of life in the U.S. will be replaced by those of these families native homelands, as many immigrants’ loyalties lie not where they live, but where they are from. You know that the changing nature of American families causes substantial discomfort for many of your members. You support policies that help maintain the character of America.

ACAP does not want to tarnish its professional reputation. Despite promoting a protectionist agenda, it does not want to lose credibility by being labeled culturally insensitive or, at worst, a racist organization. You are therefore open to considering “compassionate” immigration strategies that do not negatively impact your interests.