

New booklet summarizes Cato scholar's findings

Myths and Facts of Immigration in the United States

Alex Nowrasteh is the director of immigration studies and of the Herbert A. Stiefel Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, providing expert analysis and groundbreaking research on the realities of immigration in the United States. His peer-reviewed academic publications have appeared in a variety of prestigious journals, and he regularly appears in major media outlets, including national cable news networks.

But it was a Cato blog post that became one of his most-cited pieces of writing. “The 14 Most Common Arguments against Immigration and Why They’re Wrong” was published on *Cato at Liberty* on May 2, 2018. In it, Nowrasteh runs through the objections to



liberalizing immigration laws that he hears most often, from abuse of welfare to stealing jobs to crime rates, and provides his evidence-based rebuttals.

The post turned out to be such a popular and concise summation of the case for immigration and the counterarguments to restrictionists that it has now been adapted into a short booklet published by

Cato’s Libertarianism.org. With one more argument added to make a total of 15 and retitled *The Most Common Arguments Against Immigration and Why They’re Wrong*, the colorful and sharply illustrated 37-page booklet is available both in print and as a free download.

As Nowrasteh explains, “This booklet attempts to answer the most common objections to immigration that I’ve heard throughout my career from policy wonks and academics as well as from everyday Americans.”

Arguments discussed include no. 7, “Immigrants are a major source of crime.” Nowrasteh pulls from his own original research to show that immigrants are much less likely than native-born Americans to commit crimes, including violent crimes.

For no. 13, he addresses the claim that “Immigrants bring with them bad cultures, ideas, or other factors that will undermine and destroy our economic and political institutions.” The reality is that there is no evidence that immigrants do anything of the sort. One explanation is the self-selecting nature of immigration. It is people with the highest opinions of American liberty, the ones most eager to escape oppressive ruling ideologies at home, who uproot their lives and come to the United States.

Two of the most common arguments, including from some libertarians, are no. 3, “Immigrants abuse the welfare state,” and no. 4, “Immigrants increase the budget deficit and government debt.” This might seem intuitive, but as Nowrasteh explains, it’s not true. Immigrants are less likely to use welfare, on top of being subject to many legal restrictions that exclude them from most welfare programs. Many tend to come to America as young adults, after any possible costs of public schooling and with decades to go before hitting the age of retirement benefits. In other words, immediate net taxpayers. “Immigrants in the United States have about a net-zero effect on government budgets,” concludes Nowrasteh. ■

THE MOST COMMON ARGUMENTS AGAINST IMMIGRATION AND WHY THEY’RE WRONG IS AVAILABLE IN PRINT OR AS A FREE DOWNLOAD AT LIBERTARIANISM.ORG AND IN KINDLE FORMAT ON AMAZON.

Cato News Notes

LIBERTY, INSHALLAH

Mustafa Akyol, Cato senior fellow, was one of three scholars of Islam whose work was profiled by *The Economist* (“Thinkers in America Are Debating Islam’s Past and Future,” May 17, 2021). Akyol, whose newly released book *Reopening Muslim Minds* makes the case for enlightenment, toleration, and liberalism in the Muslim world, was contrasted with some of the other writers who have recently written on the same issues. The book has also drawn coverage in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*.

MARE LIBERUM

Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) and Rep. Tom McClintock (R-CA) have introduced the Open America’s Waters Act, a bill that would repeal the Jones Act and allow all qualified vessels to engage in domestic trade between U.S. ports. In their announcement of the bill, the legislators cited research from Cato’s Project on Jones Act Reform outlining how “the annual cost of the Jones Act is in the tens of billions of dollars.”

CATO COMES HOME

As pandemic restrictions are wound down in the nation’s capital, in-person work has resumed at Cato’s building on Massachusetts Avenue, which had been closed for the past year except for essential facilities and support staff. In-person events are also resuming.