

Oklahoma State Work Permits and Visas Task Force
Special meeting
July 22, 2024, 9:00 am

Notes from the Consulate of Mexico in Oklahoma City

The last meeting was of great interest to me. This was due to the extraordinary presentation by the Tulsa team and the very interesting contributions from each of you.

Based on the feedback we shared, I reviewed the Governor's Executive Order once again and confirmed my impression that what he expects from this Working Group, is that we provide general recommendations on how the State should deal with the migration phenomenon. The document itself recognizes the value of these working groups and makes a clear distinction between those who have the genuine intention to work, contribute, and raise their families in Oklahoma without breaking the law (which represents the vast majority) and those who engage in illegal activities.

In this context, it's worth noting that following the introduction by the legislative power of HB4156, which later became state law and is currently facing challenges in federal courts, the largest police departments in the State—particularly Tulsa and Oklahoma City—declared that they lacked resources to enforce this new law. They emphasized that the way it is currently drafted makes it impossible to implement without engaging in racial profiling. And declared that laws of this nature, far from assisting law enforcement agencies, actually complicate their work by straining their relationships with different communities and diverting resources away from addressing the root causes of criminality.

Another central aspect regarding the discussion and approval of HB4156 has been the border crisis. In this regard, I believe it's valid for this Working Group to analyze whether state laws of this nature (which criminalize migrants who are in the State, employed, working, and not involved in criminal activities), actually address the border issue to some or any extent. Additionally, it's essential to evaluate how much the border situation affects a non-border state like Oklahoma, which has a significant growth potential, but will require a larger migrant workforce to fully realize it.

As we shared in our initial intervention, it is our impression that the United States has a paradoxical relationship with migration. On one hand, certain segments of its population attribute challenging and even

dangerous aspects to migration, while on the other hand, other sectors recognize the substantial benefits it brings through its workforce, creativity, entrepreneurship, and social and cultural contributions. In this context, Oklahoma appears to be in a process of transitioning toward greater openness to migration, but it faces strong resistance from certain groups.

As I understand it, one of the main objectives of the Executive Order is for this group to conduct an analysis based on objective elements supported by data, from which recommendations will subsequently be generated to create public policies that allow Oklahoma to deal with the migration phenomenon in the best way for the benefit of its interests and Oklahomans.

The following aspects seem to me relevant for this analysis. Below, I offer general ideas and specific data for each thesis, which I won't delve into today to avoid excessive length, but I include them in the document for your consideration:

1.- Is migration positive or negative? Evidence clearly shows that immigrants provide significant economic benefits. However, there are local and short-term economic and social costs.

- *As with debates on trade, where protectionist instincts tend to overwhelm the longer term need for more open societies, the core role that immigrants play in economic development is often overwhelmed by defensive measures to keep immigrants out. A solution needs to be found through policies that allow the benefits to compensate for the losses.*
- *Research at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco concluded that “immigrants expand the economy’s productive capacity by stimulating investment and promoting specialization, which produces efficiency gains and boosts income per worker”.*
- *Immigrant households contribute hundreds of billions of dollars in federal, state, and local taxes and hold a tremendous amount of spending power. This gives them significant economic clout, helping support local communities as consumers and taxpayers. Like all residents of the United States, regardless of where they were born, immigrants make use of public services like education, healthcare, and public safety. Even with these costs, however, immigrants’ economic contributions far outweigh the cost of additional public services they incur.*

- *Research on the net fiscal impact of immigration shows that immigrants contribute significantly more in taxes than the benefits and services they receive in return. According to the World Bank, increasing immigration by a margin equal to 3% of the workforce in developed countries would generate global economic gains of \$356 billion.*

Sources:

<https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/oklahoma/>

<https://www.frbsf.org/research-and-insights/publications/economic-letter/2010/08/effect-immigrants-us-employment-productivity/>

<https://camoinassociates.com/resources/how-immigrants-contribute-to-economic-growth-and-prosperity/>

2.- Historical migration flows in the USA are not extraordinarily high today. Although in March 2024 the foreign-born or immigrant population (documented and undocumented) hit a new record high of 51.6 million, making up 15.6 percent of the total U.S. population, this compares to 13.9% of the population in 2022 and 14.8% of the population in 1890.

- *As of recent data, approximately 53% of the foreign-born population in the United States are naturalized citizens.*
- *In 2022, the 10.7 million U.S. residents born in Mexico represented by far the largest immigrant group in the United States, although their number was down by about 1 million since 2010. In contrast, between 2010 and 2022, the immigrant population from India increased by more than 1 million and the population from China rose by 647,000.*
- *Mexican immigrants made up 23 percent of the U.S. immigrant population in 2022, down from 29 percent in 2010. India and China were the next largest sending countries, accounting for approximately 2.8 million and 2.5 million immigrants in 2022, respectively, or 6 percent and 5 percent of all immigrants. Other top countries of origin included the Philippines (4 percent); El Salvador, Vietnam, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic (each 3 percent); and Guatemala and Korea (each 2 percent).*

Sources:

[https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI14H8pK64hwMVyTrUAR0yTgaHEAAYASAAEgIJZvD_BwE)

[states?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI14H8pK64hwMVyTrUAR0yTgaHEAAYASAAEgIJZvD_BwE](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI14H8pK64hwMVyTrUAR0yTgaHEAAYASAAEgIJZvD_BwE)

<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2024/foreign-born-population.html>

3.- The number of undocumented migrants is not extraordinarily high historically either. In 2007, there were 12.2 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., constituting **4% of the total population**. By 2021, this number had decreased to 10.5 million (3.1% of the total population) due to reduced Mexican immigration and pandemic-related disruptions. However, **as of March 2024, the population of undocumented migrants had grown to 14 million people, representing 4.2% of the total population.**

- *After the pandemic, the US economy roared back with a huge demand for immigrant labor. At the same time, many US workers decided not to return to the workforce immediately, which put extraordinary pressure on the labor market and the border, which was not prepared for this.*
- *It is relevant to establish that the majority of new immigrants get employed by the economy shortly after they arrive and that they need to remain employed to survive, as they do not have access to Social Security, housing, etc.*
- *After remaining largely unchanged for more than a decade, the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. has risen during the last 4 years. But not by as much as some voices claim. Here are the results of some formal studies on this regard:*
 - *“The methodology and data being used by demographers today provides strong statistical evidence that the undocumented population residing in the United States in January 2022 was about 11 (million) to 12 million,” said Robert Warren, a demographer and senior visiting fellow at the Center for Migration Studies of New York, a think tank studying international migration.*
 - *11.2 million in 2021, up from 11 million in 2019, according to the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute.*
 - *10.5 million in 2021, up from 10.2 million in 2019, according to the nonpartisan Pew Research Center.*
 - *10.9 million in 2022, up from 10.3 million in 2021, according to the Center for Migration Studies of New York.*
 - *12.3 million in May 2023, up from 10.2 million in January 2021, according to the Center for Immigration Studies, a think tank favoring low immigration levels. Steven Camarota, the center’s research director, recently provided a preliminary estimate of 14 million people in the country illegally as of March 2024.*

- 16.8 million in 2023, according to the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a group advocating for reduced immigration.

4.- **Demographic trends in the USA show that the U.S. population is aging, with the number of people aged 65 and older projected to increase from 18% in 2024 to 23% by 2054.** This is due to a combination of factors, including increasing life expectancies and a declining birth rate.

- For sure, some of the undocumented migrants who came into the US during the last 4 years will end up working in the care industry for elderly citizens. Mexico, for example, has seen a strong increase in the care industry in different cities, as alternatives in the US shrink.
- **The Congressional Budget Office this past January reported... Population growth generally slows over the next 30 years, from 0.6 percent per year, on average, between 2024 and 2034 to 0.2 percent per year, on average, between 2045 and 2054. Net immigration increasingly drives population growth and accounts for all population growth beginning in 2040,** in part because fertility rates remain below the rate that would be required for a generation to replace itself in the absence of immigration.
- The Social Security area population is projected to be larger (by 2.4 percent in 2053) and to grow slightly faster, on average, than the CBO projected last year. Upward revisions to net immigration from 2024 to 2026, which boost the size and growth of the population ages 25 to 54 in particular, account for most of that difference, as immigrants are disproportionately young. Partially offsetting that change is a reduction in the projected total fertility rate, from 1.75 to 1.70 births per woman. The CBO also reduced its projection of mortality rates for people age 65 or older over the first two decades of the projection period, reflecting fewer deaths due to COVID-19 than the agency previously projected.
- In the future, it will become even more imperative to ensure a strong labor supply augmented by foreign workers. Globally, the population is ageing. With fertility collapsing to below replacement levels in all regions except Africa, experts are predicting rapidly rising dependency ratios and a decline in the OECD workforce from around 800 million to close to 600 million by 2050. The problem is particularly acute in North America, Europe and Japan.

Sources:

<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/59697#:~:text=In%20CBO's%20projections%2C%20the%20U.S.,population%20growth%20beginning%20in%202040.>

5.- Demographic trends in Oklahoma are similar. The population of Oklahoma is also aging.

- **Between 2010 and 2022, Oklahoma's population grew by 6.9%, from 3.76 to 4.02 million people. While this net population growth may seem positive initially, comparing it to other states reveals varying dynamics. For example, during the same period: Utah's population grew by 22%; Texas' by 19% (4.8 million people net gain); Florida's by 18% (3.4 million people net gain); Colorado's by 15.7%; Arizona's by 15%; South Carolina's by 14%. Even California's grew by 4.6% which represented a 1.7 million people net gain.**
- **Additionally, the age distribution matters: In Oklahoma among six age groups, the 65+ group was the fastest growing with its population increasing 29.8%. The 0 to 4 age group declined the most dropping 7.9%.**
- **Moreover, the percentage of children in Oklahoma with at least one foreign parent increased from 7% of the total population in 2000 to 14% in 2022. This indicates that without immigrants, the aging of the population would have been more pronounced.**
- **By ethnicity group, whites non-hispanic decreased by 1.2%, American-Indians grew by only .07%, while Asians grew 53% (from 65K to 100K people) and Hispanics grew by 46% (from 310K to 490K people).**
- **These trends changed during the pandemic, as Oklahoma saw a large inflow of new residents in each of the past three years, resulting in the state's largest population increases since 2013.**
- Most places in the state gained people on net, but the Oklahoma City and Tulsa Metropolitan Areas had the most growth. Additionally, over half of the new residents are working age and employed across a wide range of industries and occupations with a broad variety of incomes and credit scores.
- Oklahoma netted over 30,500 employed residents since 2020, far exceeding the cumulative loss of about 17,000 employed residents from 2015 to 2019. **The State's economy has surely benefitted from this bout of pandemic migration, but whether this trend will continue as national migration slows remains to be seen.**

Sources:

<https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/oklahoma/>

Population Boom: Where are Oklahoma's newest residents living and working? Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (kansascityfed.org)

6.- The undocumented migrant population in Oklahoma is smaller than the national rate and has not increased significantly in the last 5 years.

- According to the Migration Policy Institute, **in 2019 Oklahoma was home to 90,000 undocumented migrants, representing 2.3% of the state's population. In contrast, Texas had 1.8 million undocumented migrants during the same year, accounting for 6% of its population. California had 2.7 million, which accounted for 6.7% of its population. For Florida it was 3.6% of its population and New York the 4.3%.**
- **In parallel, the American Immigration Council reported that in 2024 there were 82,700 undocumented migrants in Oklahoma, which is only 2.1% of the population. Within this group, 92% are of working age.**
- **The previous figures indicate that far from being a problem, the undocumented migrant population in Oklahoma might be decreasing. Given the youth and high employment rates of this population compared to the needs in various industries in Oklahoma's economy, I believe it is valid to conclude that the lower rate of this sector of the population in Oklahoma represents a loss of productivity and economic competitiveness for the state in the medium and long term.**

Sources:

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/Unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/OK>
<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/national-media-release/cbp-releases-january-2024-monthly-update>

7.- Recent migration crisis. Border Patrol apprehensions across the southern border are down three fold since December of 2023.

- **Across the southern border, Border Patrol agents apprehended 83,536 migrants in June, down from 117,901 in May, 140,638 in February and 249,785 in December.**
- **This marked the fewest monthly apprehensions since January 2021, when the pandemic was very present and naturally stopped migrants from trying to cross into the US.**
- **These results are the result of, among other reasons: an increased collaboration with Mexico, increased presence of Homeland Security agents at the border, the issuance of new executive orders limiting asylum requests, and the easing of the pressure on the labor market in the US as the pandemic disruptions clear out.**

Source:

<https://www.texastribune.org/2024/07/16/texas-border-migrant-apprehensions-decrease/>

8.- Crime rates among migrant workers. The discourse that seeks, in a Manichean manner, to link migrant workers with security issues, drug trafficking, etc., permeates the public psyche because it exploits fears and makes it difficult to build effective public policies. Nevertheless, it does not rely on data.

- *Immigrants are significantly less likely to commit crimes than the U.S.-born. Study finds over a 150-year period, immigrants have never been incarcerated at a greater rate than those born in the United States.*
- **Immigrants are 60% less likely to be incarcerated than U.S. born citizens, and 30% less likely relative to U.S. born whites.**
- *“A surprising finding was the extent to which immigrants with lower levels of education today are significantly less likely to commit crimes than their U.S.-born counterparts,” Jácome said. “This may indicate immigrants are more resistant to economic shocks that have affected less-educated men in recent decades.”*

Source:

<https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2024/03/immigrants-are-significantly-less-likely-to-commit-crimes-than-the-us-born/>

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/684679>

9.- Terrorism rates among migrants are extremely low, the CATO Institute reported:

- *The chance of a person perishing in a terrorist attack committed by a foreigner on U.S. soil over the 48-year period studied here is 1 in 4.3 million per year.*
- *The hazard posed by foreigners who entered on different visa categories varies considerably. For instance, **the annual chance of an American being murdered in a terrorist attack by a refugee is about 1 in 3.3 billion, while the annual chance of being murdered in an attack committed by an illegal immigrant is zero.** Looking at this spectrum of risk, any government response to terrorism must consider the wide range of hazards posed by foreign-born terrorists who entered under various visa categories.*

Source:

<https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/terrorism-immigration>

Are there other theses or topics that you believe we should review and take into consideration for our analysis?

Conclusions:

The information shared beforehand can serve as a basis for a thesis that considers migration as a positive factor for the development of Oklahoma. However, there are also voices that believe the stress and cultural disruptions that accompany migration are more costly than the benefits it may bring. **I believe this is a core dilemma, and it would be useful for this working group to establish premises in one direction or the other.**

If it is considered desirable to increase migratory flows to Oklahoma, for example, to support certain industries in the economy and promote a healthier demographic growth, one could **propose the creation of a government body that, as in the case of Tulsa and other states in the USA, works to design and implement specific measures to:**

- **Thoroughly analyze** the current and estimated future needs of workers in different industries in Oklahoma.
- **Contrast** these needs with the availability of local workers to evaluate the desirable number of migrant workers in each industry.
- **Create programs** to assist potential employers in bringing migrant workers to their industries based on the available visas presented today in Attorney García's presentation and the document we shared in the first meeting.
- **Establish exchange programs** for workers in high-demand sectors such as bilingual teachers, nurses, doctors, etc.
- In this regard, it is important to evaluate that unfortunately, for the undocumented population already residing in the state, there are no alternatives to change their immigration status while in the country, except for those who are married to a US citizen, are children of a US citizen, or have completed higher education studies in the USA, according to recently published executive measures by the federal government.

Thank you for your attention.