**VOTING EXPANSION**

People who are lawful permanent residents (LPRs) in the United States are noncitizens who have immigrated legally and are authorized to live permanently in the country.[[1]](#footnote-1) Some cities in states like Maryland, California, Main, Illinois, and Massachusetts, are allowing LPRs to vote in municipal elections.[[2]](#footnote-2) New York City is likely to approve legislation that would extend the right to vote to an even broader range of noncitizens such as people brought to the United States illegally as children, but are authorized to live and work in the country under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy. The move to include lawful noncitizens in local elections has created a public divide.

Supporters of voting expansion legislation argue that the right to vote should follow from participating in city affairs in the same way that citizens do. Like citizens, lawful noncitizens pay taxes, send their children to public schools, and rely on city services. By allowing those who depend on city services to have a say on their effectiveness, resources are argued to improve for everyone. Separately, lawful noncitizens may face unique challenges (such as xenophobia or unequal bargaining power with employers or landlords) that representation could help address.

By contrasts, “[v]oters in Alabama, Colorado and Florida passed ballot measures last year stipulating that only U.S. citizens could vote, joining Arizona and North Dakota in specifying that noncitizens could not vote in state and local elections.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Opponents of LPRs voting argue that the opinions of citizens ought to be given preference over lawful noncitizens because of their often longer-standing roots in the community. Allowing lawful noncitizens to vote would decrease the value of those citizen votes. Opponents also argue that by allowing lawful noncitizens the right to vote, cities offer less incentive for lawful noncitizens to become citizens.

So, what do you think? Should lawful noncitizens be allowed to vote in local elections?

*Municipal elections affect local living conditions and communities so intimately that it’s difficult to imagine any benefit from discluding legal noncitizens. The path to citizenship is such a long one that a legal noncitizen can live there for the majority of a decade before becoming eligible for citizenship.*

*If citizenship has any content, it must entail at least one privilege or right not available to non-citizens. The right to vote is fundamental to the distinction between citizens and non-citizens. It would also be imprudent to let temporary residents vote, because often they will not have to live with the long-term consequences of their electoral choices. They can choose to do so by naturalizing, but then they are citizens.*

**ABOLISHING ICE**

The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, also known as ICE, was formed in 2003 to better protect national security and strengthen public safety in response to the 9/11 attacks. Currently, ICE’s most well-known division is Enforcement and Removal Operations, which detains and deports undocumented immigrants. ICE deportations reached a record high under former President Barack Obama—an achievement that earned him the nickname “Deporter in Chief” from immigration groups. In February 2017, former President Donald Trump signed an executive order expanding ICE’s focus to include most undocumented immigrants living in the country, regardless of their criminal records. The agency made 37,734 “noncriminal” arrests in the government’s 2017 fiscal year, more than twice the number in 2016. Between October 2021 and March 2022, ICE said it arrested roughly 80,000 people, 33 percent of whom were considered noncriminal, compared with 21 percent of the 63,000 people arrested in the same period the year before.

“Abolish ICE” is a political movement that gained traction following Trump’s family separation policy in 2018. People who support the abolishment of ICE say that ICE treats immigrants as security threats—not as people who are part of our communities. They point to what they see as the unnecessary militarization of ICE and believe ICE’s functions (to the extent they should not be abandoned entirely) could be performed by other agencies. They claim that some of ICE’s practices can be considered human rights abuses, citing the treatment of migrant children in facilities at the U.S. - Mexico border, including separation of those children from their families. They think alternatives to ICE such as legal, social and community based programs, could be more effective.

Opponents of “Abolish ICE” say that ICE is important to national security and public safety. ICE’s stated mission is to protect the United States from cross-border crime and illegal immigrants who are a threat to public safety. More moderate opponents simply maintain that “Abolish Ice” is a harmful distraction, especially at a time when some 2,000 children still haven’t been reunited with their families. They say the discussion should be moved away for government reorganization and focus on reuniting the children with their families.

So, what do you think? Should ICE be abolished, replaced, reformed, or stay the same? Why?

*I think the purpose of ICE is a legitimate one, but the enforcement mechanisms are harmful and should be reformed substantially, but probably does not need to be abolished.*

*I think national security interests outweigh any harm that ICE causes, so it should stay the same.*

*I think ICE should be abolished because a lot of its tactics are harmful and it does not need to exist.*

**POLICY PRIORITIES**

The Immigration and Nationality Act allows the United States to grant up to 675,000 permanent immigrant visas each year. Global interest in such visas far exceeds that number. So long as this imbalance persists, the United States must decide how to prioritize visa applicants. Current policy is based on the following principles: the reunification of families, admitting immigrants with skills that are valuable to the U.S. economy, protecting refugees, and promoting diversity. Two graphics below show how these policies play out numerically.

Opinions differ over what values the United States should prioritize in setting its immigration policy. One view would emphasize U.S. economic interests. According to this view, the United States should set immigration quotas and selection criteria (such as valuable skill sets) with an eye to increasing national gross domestic product. Depending on one’s economic assumptions, this approach may call for increasing or decreasing levels of immigration. When immigration policy focuses on such economic rationales, it is more defensible in terms of the needs of present U.S. citizens. It also helps preserve and grow the economic opportunities that make the United States an attractive option for many potential migrants in the first place.

A different view focuses more on the needs of potential immigrants, many of whom hope to escape desperate economic, social, or political conditions in their home countries. Even where such immigrants pose some potential burden to U.S. domestic economic interests, those burdens pale in comparison to the life-changing opportunities moving to the United States could offer. Having benefited so disproportionately from the present world order, the United States has a moral imperative to allow others to share in the benefits of the world order that led to its economic dominance.

So, what do you think? Should U.S. immigration policy prioritize U.S. economic growth or the social/economic needs of people interested in migrating?

*I don't think economic needs should play a part in immigration. Instead, we should consider non-monetary justifications for immigrating such as increased safety, opportunity, or shared values.*

*I think that there is a lack of social cohesion in the U.S. right now so I think immigration should be promoted insofar as we can maintain social cohesion.*

*Trick question! The George Borjas's of the world would have everyone think that this is a dichotomy, but the empirics have consistently shown that immigrants not only don't hurt the U.S. bottom line, but increase GDP growth.*

*This is a false dichotomy. Especially in service-based economies (like most of the U.S.), indefinite economic growth is theoretically possible as more people (including immigrants) require more services. The new people can fill these niches, and when these niches are filled with immigrants, fun and interesting music, food, holidays, etc. are introduced.*

**SURVEY**

Add the numbers of your responses together. This will help us pair people up for discussion.

**Prompt A**: Should lawful noncitizens be allowed to vote in local elections?

1. Yes. 2. I have no opinion or my opinion is conflicted. 3. No.

**Prompt B**: Should ICE be abolished, replaced, reformed, or stay the same?

1. Yes. 2. I have no opinion or my opinion is conflicted. 3. No.

**Prompt C**: Should U.S. immigration policy prioritize U.S. economic growth or the social/economic needs of people interested in migrating?

1. The needs of people. 2. I have no opinion or my opinion is conflicted. 3. Economic growth.

**Total: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

1. Lawful permanent residents (LPR). Lawful Permanent Residents | Homeland Security. (n.d.). Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/lawful-permanent-residents#:~:text=Lawful%20permanent%20residents%20(LPRs)%2C,permanently%20within%20the%20United%20States.&amp;text=They%20also%20may%20apply%20to,they%20meet%20certain%20eligibility%20requirements>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mays, J. C., &amp; Correal, A. (2021, November 23). New York moves to allow 800,000 noncitizens to vote in local elections. The New York Times. Retrieved February 10, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/23/nyregion/noncitizen-voting-rights-nyc.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)