

# ***Migrant Justice***

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There are approximately 1500 migrant workers that help sustain Vermont's struggling dairy farms. Without access to any available legal status and living in one of the whitest and most rural states in the country many migrant dairy workers are converted into virtual prisoners on the farm. Due to this isolation and marginalization workers struggle to access essential community resources like health care and food. If you drink milk, eat cheese, vegetables, chicken or have ever enjoyed a clean hotel room you can thank a migrant worker.

**While the federal government continues to fail to create humane and just immigration, food system, and health care policies we in Vermont have an opportunity and responsibility to build welcoming, inclusive, just and humane communities for everyone who lives and works here!**

## **Facts about Vermont's migrant workers and Vermont dairy farms:**

- Today just over 1,000 Vermont dairy farms exist and at least 1/2 of Vermont's milk comes from the labor of undocumented workers (VT Agency of Agriculture).
- Vermont farmers who employ immigrant workers consistently state they would not survive without them
- There is no available legal path for undocumented immigrants to work in Vermont on dairy farms
- Of the 600 Vermonters surveyed in the most recent *Vermont poll*: the majority feel that migrant workers are helping to keep our farms in business, that they are not taking jobs away from Vermonters and that a guest worker program to help our dairy farms is something that they support." And 72% surveyed supported the adoption of bias-free policing programs." (UVM Rural Studies)
- Vermont's migrant farm-workers **do** pay taxes; not only federal and state income taxes but also social security taxes and sales taxes from which they will never receive any direct benefits.  
(source for above: UVM Extension, VT Human Rights Commission)
- U.S. Trade Policies have increased migration. The North American Free Trade Agreement eliminated over 2 million Mexican corn farms, as subsidized corn imported from the U.S. undersells the indigenous producers. Migration from Mexico to the U.S. has doubled since NAFTA.
- An H2A VISA program would not legalize workers currently living and working on Vermont dairy farms
- The VT State Police recently improved its Bias-Free-Policing Policy to now state, "...members should not use agency resources, equipment or personnel for the purposed of detecting or apprehending individuals whose only violation of law is thatye are present in the United States without authorization or proper documents."

## **Myths and realities about immigration and immigrants:**

*Myth: Immigrants don't pay taxes and just milk the system*

### **Reality:**

Many studies have found that immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits. The National Research Council estimated in 1997 that "the average immigrant pays nearly \$1,800 more in taxes than he or she costs in benefits." Many recent state-level studies have also found that immigrants contribute more to the economy than they take out.

Between one-half to three-quarters of unauthorized immigrants pay federal and state income taxes, Social Security taxes, and Medicare taxes. All unauthorized immigrants pay sales taxes (when they buy anything at a store, for instance) and property taxes (even if they rent housing). And yet they receive no social security or medicare and many 'legal' immigrants must wait at least 5 years to do so.

According to a study in the *American Journal of Public Health*, immigrants do not impose a disproportionate financial burden on the U.S. health care system. The per capita total health care expenditures of immigrants are less than half those of U.S.-born persons, and immigrants are significantly less likely to use the emergency room than are citizens.

*Myth: Undocumented workers should just get in line and come here legally*

**Reality:**

**There is no “line” for the vast majority of unauthorized immigrants:** Accusations that an estimated 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants—about 5% of the U.S. workforce—should simply “get in line” miss the point: **There is no “line” and the “regular channels” do not include them.**

*Myth: Americans don't support immigration reform:*

**Reality:**

According to polls of likely 2010 general election voters conducted for America's Voice by Lake Research Partners and Benenson Strategy Group, 66% of all voters and 74% of Latino voters supported comprehensive immigration reform as opposed to enforcement - only measures. This included 62% of Republicans, 67% of Independents, and 69% of Democrats.

*Myth: Immigrants are stealing jobs and ruining the economy.*

**Reality:**

A 2010 report released by the Immigration Policy Center (IPC) and the Center for American Progress (CAP), *Raising the Floor for American Workers: The Economic Benefits of Comprehensive Immigration Reform*, finds that comprehensive immigration reform which includes a legalization program for unauthorized immigrants and enables a future flow of legal workers would result in a large economic benefit—a cumulative \$1.5 trillion in added U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over 10 years. In stark contrast, a deportation - only policy would result in a loss of \$2.6 trillion in GDP over 10 years.

A 2009 report by the libertarian Cato Institute came to startlingly similar conclusions. Cato found that legalization would boost the incomes of U.S. households by \$180 billion in 2019.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2002, 1.6 million Hispanic - owned firms provided jobs to 1.5 million employees, had receipts of \$222 billion, and generated payroll of \$36.7 billion. The same year, 1.1 million Asian - owned firms provided jobs to 2.2 million employees, had receipts of \$326.4 billion, and generated payroll of \$56 billion.

According to the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia, the purchasing power of Latinos totaled \$978.4 billion in 2009 and is projected to reach \$1.3 trillion by 2014. The purchasing power of Asians totaled \$508.6 billion in 2009 and is projected to reach \$696.5 billion by 2014.

The annual budget of the U.S. Border Patrol stood at \$3 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010—a nine - fold increase since FY 1992. The number of Border Patrol agents stationed along the southwest border grew to 17,000 in FY 2010—a nearly five - fold increase since FY 1992.

Source: GIVING FACTS A FIGHTING CHANCE: ANSWERS TO THE TOUGHEST IMMIGRATION QUESTIONS. IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER. OCTOBER, 2010. [www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org).



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