CREATING A CORPS BASED FEDERAL WORK PROGRAM
TO LEGALIZE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

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By

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ABSTRACT

For decades, immigration control policy has sought the legalization of undocumented immigrants. Although the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA, P.L. 99-603) achieved limited success in legalizing three million undocumented immigrants, the potential of the program was never fully tapped. The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (CIRA, S.2611) passed by the Senate in 2006, was to provide amnesty to approximately ten million undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States. However, the bill failed to pass the conference committee and died at the end of the 109th Congress. Considerable opposition still exists among immigration restrictionists and social conservatives to the idea of amnesty for undocumented workers. Given the divided public opinion, practical solutions for legalizing undocumented immigrants have yet to be implemented.

By applying the Depression Era’s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) model to a federal work program for undocumented immigrants, the government does not need to “reinvent the wheel” in solving matters of illegal immigration. A corps based legalization program can be used to put undocumented immigrants currently living in
the United States on a tough, but fair pathway towards citizenship. Under the corps model, undocumented immigrants may earn the rights to citizenship by investing in their communities through public work programs, green job acts, and by relieving disaster stricken communities.

This corps based legalization program would put in place the necessary oversight for creating an employment verification system, maintaining fair wages, issuing lawful work permits, and in terminating the job magnet or “under-the-table” work for undocumented immigrants. As a temporary agency, this legalization program seeks to prevent future waves of illegal immigration to the United States. Moreover, this corps based legalization program would promote development, protect the nation’s land and resources, and sustain the welfare system by generating taxable incomes and health care benefits for the undocumented. Under the corps model’s education policy, illegal immigrants may also receive significant educational opportunities such as vocational training, English language instruction, and citizenship classes.

The creation of a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants has the potential to achieve comprehensive immigration reform while stimulating the economy, protecting the environment, and boosting national security. This thesis will present the corps model as a win-win policy in achieving comprehensive immigration reform.
To my parents, Larry and Sally Aniel
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## ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Civilian Conservation Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIRA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Center for Immigration Studies</td>
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<td>CNCS</td>
<td>Corporation for National and Community Service</td>
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<td>FAIR</td>
<td>Federation for American Immigration Reform</td>
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<td>GED</td>
<td>General Education Development credential</td>
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<td>INS</td>
<td>U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service</td>
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<td>IRCA</td>
<td>Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986</td>
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<td>LEM</td>
<td>Local Experienced Men</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPR</td>
<td>Legal Permanent Residence</td>
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<td>LULAC</td>
<td>League of United Latin American Citizens</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEChA</td>
<td>Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCCC</td>
<td>AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps</td>
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<td>SCIRP</td>
<td>Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy</td>
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<td>USA Patriot Act</td>
<td>Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act</td>
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<td>VISTA</td>
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INTRODUCTION

Today, an estimated twelve million illegal immigrants reside in the United States. For decades, immigration control policy has sought the legalization of undocumented immigrants. The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (CIRA, S.2611) passed by the Senate in 2006, would provide amnesty to approximately ten million of these undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.¹ However, the bill failed to pass the conference committee and died at the end of the 109th Congress. Considerable opposition still exists among immigration restrictionists and social conservatives to the idea of amnesty for undocumented workers. Given the divided public opinion, practical solutions for illegal immigration have yet to be implemented. This thesis will present the corps model as a viable framework for comprehensive immigration reform.

By applying the Depression Era’s Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) model to a public work program for illegal immigrants, the government does not need to “reinvent the wheel” in solving matters of illegal immigration. A public work program for national service and conservation that is modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps, can be used to put illegal immigrants currently living in the United States on an orderly and socially acceptable path towards citizenship.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's most successful New Deal programs that was used to alleviate unemployment during the Great Depression. The Corps Network explains that “over three million young men served in the CCC from 1933-1942, dramatically improving the nation’s public lands while receiving food, housing, education, and a $30-a-month stipend that many sent home to help support their families.” The CCC made a lasting impact on the nation’s land, resources, and on the character of three million men who invested in their communities while receiving vocational and educational training.

From at-risk youth to working professionals, local, state, and national corps engage a variety of members in national and community service. Local and state corps operate in forty-two states and in the District of Columbia. Federally sponsored AmeriCorps programs serve all U.S. states and territories. Corpsmembers that serve on the local and state levels receive a modest stipend, significant educational opportunities, and career preparation. Corpsmembers serving with national AmeriCorps programs also receive health benefits, living allowances, and education awards. Undocumented immigrants can provide complementary services to the corps movement today because many already possess skills in the agricultural, lumber, and construction industries.

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Under the corps model, undocumented immigrants may earn the rights to citizenship by investing in their communities through public work programs, green job acts, and by relieving disaster stricken communities. Moreover, a public work program of this type would put in place the necessary oversight for creating an employment verification system, maintaining fair wages, issuing lawful work permits, and in terminating the job magnet to prevent future waves of illegal immigration to the United States. Moreover, this corps based legalization program would promote development, protect the nation’s land and resources, and sustain the welfare system by generating taxable incomes and health care benefits for the undocumented. Under the corps model’s education policy, undocumented immigrants may also receive significant educational opportunities such as vocational training, English language instruction, and citizenship classes. In solving matters of illegal immigration, the corps model would provide a practical solution.
CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY AND CHALLENGES OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Illegal immigration continues to rise in the United States because of broken immigration laws and through the dynamic enticements of job-creation in a free market economy. In Michael C. LeMay’s *Illegal Immigration: A Reference Handbook*, he reveals “how gaps and failures in . . . laws and policy implementation have fed the unauthorized immigration flood.” Moreover, “the United States, having by far the world’s largest economy, draws to itself those migrants seeking relief from poverty or simply hoping for a better economic future for themselves and their children.” Therefore, new laws and policies must be implemented to curb complex illegal immigration problems in the United States.

The majority of undocumented immigrants enter the United States through border crossings. Approximately, sixty percent of unauthorized immigrants enter the United States as “the undocumented, more popularly known as the ‘illegal immigrant,’ who come into the country without paperwork or authorization, typically crossing the southern border with Mexico.” Others enter illegally in a variety of ways.

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5 Ibid., 3.

6 Ibid., 1-2.
The other forty percent of illegal immigrants are comprised of “overstayers, fraudulent entrants, or persons failing to depart.” The visa overstayer is one “who enters the country with a valid but temporary visa (for example, for tourism or as a student), who then simply goes underground and stays beyond the terms of the visa, thereby becoming illegal—an unauthorized immigrant rather than a temporary visitor.”

Visa overstayers first enter the country with valid paperwork and generally enter through the northern border with Canada and through airports and seaports across the nation. According to LeMay, “the ‘Ellis Island’ of today’s immigration to the United States is LAX airport in Los Angeles, or Kennedy Airport in New York City, or any of the other major international airports.” Illegal immigrants may also enter the country by falsifying documentation. In addition, legal permanent residents who have committed a crime after entry, become illegal if they are subject to deportation and fail to depart.

In “Immigration Control Policy: Law and Implementation” Aristide R. Zolberg explains that “during WWII, the U.S. and Mexico established the bracero program or government-operated temporary worker program that reinforced ongoing flows and

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
enhanced the dependence of both economies on their continuation.” As a temporary guest-worker program, the Bracero Program permitted U.S. employers to import workers from Mexico to work for nine months of a given year.

During World War II, high-wage wartime production jobs lured millions away from the agricultural industry, resulting in severe labor shortages. In addition, millions left the agricultural industry to serve in the armed forces. As a result, the Bracero Program was created in 1942 to supply the agricultural industry with the much needed work force. James R. Edwards Jr. and James G. Gimpel add that braceros labored in the construction industry in *The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform*. Even after World War II, the expanding U.S. economy “continued the need for—and even the expansion of—the Bracero Program.” Therefore, Congress passed the Agricultural Act of 1949 that codified prior laws and provisions for temporary workers.

Over a span of twenty-two years, more than five million Mexicans would participate in the Bracero Program. Edwards and Gimpel claim that the Johnson administration allowed the “Mexican Bracero guest-worker program to expire,

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14 Ibid.


17 Ibid.
exacerbating the illegal entry problem.” Organized labor and restrictionist groups lobbied for the Bracero Program’s termination in 1964. At the same time, American labor leaders pushed for the termination of the program because braceros had become cheap, easily exploitable sources of labor. According to Helene Hayes in *U.S. Immigration Control Policy and the Undocumented*, many employers deprived bracero workers of benefits. Although laws procured wage controls, medical insurance, free housing, and transportation for the braceros, U.S. employers provided little—if any benefits to these laborers.

LeMay declares that the “controlled entry of temporary farm workers was . . . replaced by the flow of illegal immigrants, particularly from Mexico.” For the most part, the flow of illegal immigrants was stimulated by the braceros themselves. Unintentionally, the Bracero Program inspired illegal border crossings after its demise.

Legal immigration policy changed from the quota system to a preference system under the Immigration Act of 1965. The law, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, took effect on July 1, 1968. The act tried to achieve five goals:

To preserve the family unit and to reunite separated families; to meet the need for highly skilled workers; to ease population problems created by

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19 Ibid.


22 Ibid.
emergencies, such as political upheavals, Communist country aggression (enhancing U.S. foreign policy goals), and natural disasters; to better the understanding of people through cross-cultural, national exchange programs; and to bar from the United States those aliens who were likely to represent adjustment problems because of their physical or mental health, criminal history, or dependency, or for national security reasons.\(^{23}\)

According to *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965*, the act abolished the national-origins quota system and eliminated national origin, race, or ancestry as a basis for U.S. immigration.\(^{24}\) Immigrant visas were allocated through a seven-category preference system for relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens, persons with special occupational skills, unskilled workers in short supply, and refugees.

Border crossings that were once commonplace, suddenly became illegal with the Immigration Act of 1965. According to LeMay:

> When the 1965 law imposed a 20,000 per country limit on legal immigration and the guest-worker Bracero Program was closed down, hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants who had been coming regularly and annually to the United States to work for nine months simply continued to come without authorization, and their numbers gradually grew to an estimated half-million per year.\(^{25}\)

The controlled flow of temporary workers “essentially set up chain-migration patterns that have persisted long after the end of the Bracero Program.”\(^{26}\) Braceros already knew where to find housing and employment across the border. Therefore, they became a


\(^{26}\) Ibid.
valuable network for their relatives and village compatriots. Since employers trusted their former Bracero Program workers, they continued to hire others like them. LeMay explains that the “illegal immigration flow simply replaced those who had been entering under the guest-worker provision, except that they did not return to Mexico after nine months of seasonal work in the United States.” Instead, they remained in the United States as undocumented immigrants.

Although the program was terminated in 1964, illegal immigration continued because Mexican labor was vital to the agro-industry in the United States. Hayes claims that the government had been conspiring with the agribusiness “in supplying a silent, docile labor force to increase profits.” Similarly, LeMay explains:

The Bracero Program workers filled an ‘economic wage’ niche. Their jobs paid wages low enough to allow the employer to make a profit. Faced with the loss of such cheap labor, employers had but few options. They could move their operations overseas or across the border, replace their workers with machines, hire illegal immigrants, or simply go out of business.

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28 Ibid.


As a result, illegal immigration flourished because employers opted for cheap labor and profits. Even today, the job magnet continues to attract undocumented migration to the United States.\(^\text{32}\)

Without employer sanctions in the Immigration Act of 1965, broken laws contributed to the flow of illegal immigration. LeMay reveals:

From 1965 until enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), it was illegal for workers to come to the United States without documents, but it was not illegal for employers to hire the undocumented worker.\(^\text{33}\)

Therefore, the need for temporary workers “excluded undocumented immigrants with one hand and beckoned them forth with the other.”\(^\text{34}\) Ambivalent laws left the “back-door open” for illegal immigrants to enter the United States.

Edwards and Gimpel explain that “the Truman administration first took note of ‘wetbacks’—immigrants entering the country illegally across the southwestern border from Mexico—in 1952, and proposed legislation to impose sanctions on those who harbor illegal immigrants.”\(^\text{35}\) However, employer sanctions and severe penalties for harboring illegal immigrants were blocked by an influential group of Texas congressmen whose constituents depended on the Bracero Program workers.\(^\text{36}\)


\(^{36}\) Ibid., 12.
“Texas Proviso” under the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act protected employers of illegal aliens from violating federal law.37 Inevitably, economic incentives such as ample employment opportunities for migrant workers and the American capitalists’ need for cheap labor would fuel illegal immigration to the United States. After the 1970s, illegal immigration would increasingly become a problem in the United States.

The visa cap of twenty thousand per country and the flood of refugees entering the United States during the 1970s overwhelmed the immigration system. Cold War foreign policy permitted significant numbers of refugees to flee to the United States from Cuba, the Soviet Union, Indochina, Haiti, and Central America.38 These restrictive provisions “soon resulted in enormous pressures for immigrants to arrive in the United States ‘through the back-door’—that is, illegally—because the waiting lists for legal visas began to backlog into scores of years.”39 Alarmingly, illegal immigration became a business as smugglers charged fees for safe passage through border patrol outposts.40 During the 1970s, the INS apprehended about a quarter-million undocumented immigrants who had attempted to cross the nation’s southern border with Mexico.41 By 1986, the number of undocumented immigrants had risen to approximately two million.

40 Edwards and Gimpel, The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform, 12.
The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA, P.L. 99-603) sought to address the problem of illegal immigration by legalizing undocumented workers.

Hayes explains that “concern for the human rights of the undocumented immigrants was raised for the first time in congressional debate on IRCA and formed part of the rationale for a generous, compassionate, and encompassing legalization program.”

Under the IRCA, amnesty would be granted to two categories of persons. According to Zolberg, “the first, involved persons who were present in the U.S. before 1982 and most had been admitted under one of the temporary programs and had subsequently overstayed.” The second category, covered special agricultural workers or aliens “who had entered legally or illegally and worked in agriculture for at least 90 days in 1985-1986.” The most evident achievement of the IRCA was the legalization of approximately three million people, mostly of Mexican origin. Under the IRCA, undocumented immigrants were granted amnesty and Legal Permanent Residence (LPR) status.

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44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was also an effort to block illegal migration to the United States. In an attempt to prevent future migration of undocumented workers, employer sanctions were included in the bill. LeMay maintains:

One such dramatic shift in policy aimed at illegal immigration was the enactment of employer sanctions as the ‘new’ approach to discouraging it, embodied in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.47 However, “the long and bumpy road to enactment was followed by an equally bumpy road to implementation . . . that led to complications and unintended consequences.”48 Ultimately, the program proved to be structurally unsound.

It was not totally surprising that the IRCA failed to rectify the immigration problem by way of employer sanctions. Zolberg claims:

The IRCA was worse than inadequate because . . . elements were structurally contradictory. Employer sanctions failed because they went against the interests of employers.49

Employers had to file for three years of forms and had to check on the work eligibility and identification documents of every employee. However, fraudulent documents undermined the process. Similarly, LeMay asserts:

Employer sanctions proved ineffective in demagnetizing the draw of the U.S. economy. The bill allowed for some fourteen documents to be accepted as valid demonstrations of a person’s eligibility to work. Those provisions simply fueled a phony-document industry enabling illegal

48 Ibid., 15.
aliens to continue coming and employers to hire them without fear of legal penalty for ‘knowingly hiring’ undocumented workers.\textsuperscript{50}

Employer sanctions failed because employers had little if any way to verify the legal status of their employees. In addition, the Department of Labor and Department of Justice lacked the organizational capacity and funding to successfully stop illegal immigration.

Although employer sanctions proved to be a short-term success, illegal immigration rose back to pre-IRCA levels within a year of enactment.\textsuperscript{51} Edwards and Gimpel also reveal:

Once an illegal immigrant has entered the country and settled here, the chances of discovery and prosecution are quite low—somewhere about one to two percent are ever apprehended once they have entered.\textsuperscript{52}

Therefore, attempts to prevent illegal immigration have largely remained unsuccessful in the United States.

To remedy the failed immigration control policies of the IRCA, a new corps based legalization program must be enacted to stop the flow of illegal immigrants. A public work program modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps would put undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States on an orderly and socially acceptable path towards citizenship by creating an employment verification system and lawful work permits. Once illegal immigrants earn lawful work permits and


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{52} Edwards and Gimpel, \textit{The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform}, 13.
gain the rights to citizenship, employer sanctions could then be set in place. Employers would be bound to hire workers who have found incentives to legalize their status, thereby terminating the job magnet or “under-the-table” work for illegal immigrants. However, LeMay proclaims:

These policy issues and battles associated with the decade-long struggle to enact IRCA have continued on and characterize much of the debate over the issue today. Proposals before the Congress in 2006 were remarkably similar to the issues and proposals of the mid-1980s.53

Practical solutions for illegal immigration have yet to be implemented during the “storm-door era” of U.S. immigration policy. Divided public opinions, border security, and anti-terrorism concerns heighten the problem of illegal immigration in the United States. Therefore, the corps model presents a practical and immediate solution to the complex illegal immigration problems facing America.

CHAPTER II
CURRENT IMMIGRATION CONTROL POLICY

For decades, the problem of illegal immigration has fueled heated debates. In

*U.S. Immigration Policy and the Undocumented*, Helene Hayes declares:

Undocumented immigrants in the United States have been at one and the same time invisible and ubiquitous. They are ubiquitous in the sense that they can be found as textile and garment workers, as farm workers, fruit pickers, or stable hands, or lumber workers, construction workers, nannies, dish washers, hotel workers, hospital orderlies, housemaids, or in a variety of other secondary job markets. Americans are quite ambivalent about our undocumented population. As consumers we benefit from their presence, but as citizens we insist that they have no right to be here and that further, it is they who are robbing us of tax-based benefits.¹

Such ambivalent attitudes have resulted in broken immigration laws that have left the “back-door open” for illegal immigration to the United States.

Aristide R. Zolberg examines both sides of the debate in “Immigration Control Policy: Law and Implementation.” On one side, neorestrictionist groups such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) argue that immigration negatively alters the nation’s cultural identity, overwhelms the welfare system and social services, increases crime through

undocumented settlement, and strains the environment through population pressure.\textsuperscript{2} In *Illegal Immigration*, Michael C. LeMay’s research also maintains:

[The] flow of illegal immigrants exacerbated the job and income problems of blacks, legal residents of Hispanic origin, and other secondary job market workers by reducing the number of such jobs available to them, depressing wages for those jobs they did hold, and generally undercutting working conditions.\textsuperscript{3}

On the other side of the debate, employers, civil libertarians, and free market economists argue that immigration is of net economic benefit to the United States.\textsuperscript{4} Such divisive arguments have resulted in a stalemate in the ongoing immigration battle. The basic premise of this paper is that the adverse effects of illegal immigration on the country’s economic, social, and political character can be reversed by creating a federal work program modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps to legalize undocumented immigrants. This corps based legalization program can become a key policy for comprehensive immigration reform.

For decades, the same immigration issues have repeatedly appeared as subjects of public policy deliberations. The Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy (SCIRP) was a joint presidential-congressional commission that was established

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\textsuperscript{4} Zolberg, “Immigration Control Policy: Law and Implementation,” 33-34.
\end{footnotesize}
during the Carter administration to review “the full spectrum of issues involving the illegal immigration debates.”

The commission issued its final 450 page report in 1981, with a supplemental staff report that exceeded 900 pages. According to the report:

SCIRP recommended closing the ‘back-door’ to undocumented immigration while slightly opening the front door to accommodate more legal immigration. It stressed the need to define immigration goals more sharply, to provide for a more effective structure to implement those goals, and to set forth procedures to ensure fair and efficient adjudication and administration of U.S. immigration law aimed at both legal and illegal immigration.

In order to establish a practical system of legal immigration, the commission recommended “modest increases to expedite the clearance of the huge backlogs and [to] ease family reunification pressures.” Furthermore, the report emphasized that getting illegal immigration under control was a top priority.

The commission reinforced solutions that had been previously articulated. The commission sought to implement employer sanctions, increase law enforcement and the Border Patrol, create an amnesty program, and to restructure the system and procedures of legal immigration. Beyond that, SCIRP linked solutions together and “legitimized

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6 Ibid., 12.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
the duality of the employer-sanctions/legalization approaches, saying, in essence, that one could not work without the other.9 The SCIRP report underpins the need for the corps model because it provides a practical framework in legalizing undocumented immigrants by creating an employment verification system, maintaining fair wages, generating taxable incomes, and issuing lawful work permits. Once illegal immigrants earn lawful work permits by working as corpsmembers, employer sanctions could then be set in place. LeMay explains:

   Legalization would allow the INS to concentrate its efforts on border apprehension, while employer sanctions would ‘demagnetize’ the pull of the U.S. economy, which was drawing the continued influx of undocumented workers into the United States.10

In this manner, a corps based federal work program would effectively terminate the job magnet or “under-the-table” work for illegal immigrants by maintaining fair wages and discouraging cheap, easily exploitable sources of labor.

   Today, illegal immigration has shifted from a “border states problem” to become a national problem in the United States.11 Between 2000 and 2005, immigration to the United States peaked at approximately eight million immigrants, with about half of those immigrants being illegal.12 News media outlets and public opinion polls have

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 3.

12 Ibid., 7.
manifested a growing fear that the United States is losing control of its borders. LeMay explains that “politics today struggle with heightened fears that illegal immigration overburdens governmental education, health care, prison, and welfare systems, particularly at the state and local levels.”13 States such as Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas suffer the bulk of illegal immigration problems.14 Thus, federal intervention is needed to control the problems posed by illegal immigration on all levels of government.

In the post 9/11 world, illegal immigration poses even greater challenges. LeMay reveals:

The attacks of September 11, 2001, on the New York World Trade Center Twin Towers and on the Pentagon led to serious proposals involving major overhauls of U.S. immigration policy to cope with the threat that international terrorism poses through the possibility of terrorist cells infiltrating the country through illegal immigration.15

The enactment of these laws ushered in the “storm-door era” of U.S. immigration policy, depicting this image of “Fortress America” to the world.16

At the time of the 9/11 attacks, the breakdown of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was quite evident. The shocked American public learned

14 Ibid., 17.
15 Ibid., xvii.
16 Ibid., 20.
that the student visa applications for two of the 9/11 hijackers were approved by the INS six months after the attack.\textsuperscript{17} LeMay reveals:

> Border Patrol officers at the INS were quitting faster than they could be replaced. INS investigators were rated as undertrained, overworked, and overstressed, and its information management was assessed as abysmal. Drastic restructuring was needed.\textsuperscript{18}

Shortly after the terrorist attacks, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13228 on October 8, 2001, that established the Office of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council within the Executive Office of the President.\textsuperscript{19} The INS was dissolved in 2003 with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.

The USA Patriot Act and the law to establish the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) best define the “storm-door era” of immigration policy that symbolizes “Fortress America.”\textsuperscript{20} Similarly, Zolberg explains that the USA Patriot Act was “the most significant legislative measure explicitly designed to offset the vulnerability exposed by 9/11.”\textsuperscript{21} According to LeMay:

> The USA Patriot Act (which stands for the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act), granted powers to the attorney general and the Justice Department that restricted the civil liberties of U.S. citizens,

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\textsuperscript{17} LeMay, \textit{Illegal Immigration: A Reference Handbook}, 21.
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\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\hfill \\
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\hfill \\
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{21} Zolberg, “Immigration Control Policy: Law and Implementation,” 40.
\end{flushright}
broadened the terrorism-related definitions in the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, expanded the grounds of inadmissibility to include aliens who publicly endorse terrorist activity, and gave the national government broad powers to monitor students and resident aliens and to detain and expedite the removal of noncitizens suspected even of links to terrorist organizations—that is, those whom the attorney general simply certifies as being threats to national security on whatever grounds.22

Under the act, foreign residents were prone to systematic verification. On the basis of ethnic profiling, targeted groups considered as threats to national security were the Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterners, and South Asians.23 Despite these measures, the U.S. has refrained from tightening its immigration policy and illegal immigration continues to rise amidst terrorist threats.

The nature of public policy towards illegal immigration fluctuates with world events and domestic conditions in the United States. For example:

Failure to achieve a sound economy in other nations pushes citizens to emigrate. Foreign civil wars and domestic strife renew mass refugee movements. Natural disasters and epidemics compel hundreds of thousands to migrate elsewhere. Conditions change globally and affect both legal and unauthorized immigration flows, changing them in overall size and origin.24

Currently, economic downturn in the United States heightens fears that illegal immigration is a drain on the welfare system, social services, and on the job market.

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LeMay explains that there are four key elements to understanding illegal immigration policy:

Immigration policy-making, whether directed at legal or illegal immigration flow, is a blend of four major elements: (1) the effect that immigration has on the economy, and the question of whether illegal immigration is an economic burden or a blessing; (2) how the flow of immigrants, both legal and illegal, affects the very nature of the mix of race and ethnicity that makes up the American people; (3) how that flow affects the composite sense of ‘peoplehood;’ and (4) considerations of national defense, homeland security, and foreign policy.\(^{25}\)

Since conditions in the policy environment change, citizens must “reassess the value they place on one or another of the four elements.”\(^ {26}\) The controversy over immigration is unlikely to end soon because “the two perspectives use different measures in their assumptions to assess both [the] costs and benefits of immigration.”\(^ {27}\) Therefore, these changing conditions make it difficult to pass comprehensive immigration reform bills.

In the “storm-door era” of U.S. immigration, policymakers are taking into consideration an amnesty program for illegal immigrants currently living in the United States, a temporary guest worker program as means for legal immigration, human trafficking dilemmas, and the dual nationality of immigrants who face multiple allegiances in this new world order.\(^ {28}\) With the rise of illegal immigration in the United States, it is possible that these considerations may lead to new approaches to immigration policy.\(^ {29}\)


\(^{26}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 57.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., xvii.
States, urgent pleas for an amnesty or legalization program have been made to legislators. Many regard the Bush administration’s proposed “guest worker program as nothing more than a thinly disguised amnesty” program that rewards millions of lawbreakers.29 Yet, Democratic legislators are “more likely to sponsor legalization measures” while Republican legislators “are more divided over the issue.”30 LeMay explains:

Republican legislators favoring big business see a guest-worker program as essential to supplying needed, cheaper, labor. Socially conservative Republicans are more likely to advocate restrictionist immigration reform and object to any guest-worker program.31

In consequence, the divisiveness over the illegal immigration debate has resulted in a political deadlock.

The earned legalization program proposed by Democrats aligns with the “storm-door” agenda of U.S. immigration control policy. Democrats contend that undocumented immigrants who come out of the shadows can contribute to the “homeland security effort by allowing law enforcement agencies to concentrate on border security and tracking down criminals and potential terrorists instead of chasing after millions of ordinary undocumented aliens, especially Hispanics, who are here

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30 Ibid., 33.

31 Ibid.
simply to find work.”32 Interest groups such as LaRaza, the United Farm Workers, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) support earned legalization, arguing that foreign policy relations between the United States and Mexico would improve.33 By strengthening foreign relations with Mexico, the United States can enhance border security and stop terrorist threats from entering the country.

Like employers, civil libertarians, and free market economists, most Democrats agree that immigration is of net economic benefit to the United States. Undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy by paying taxes on their cheap, easily exploitable incomes. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, illegal immigrants “earn far less than the rest of the population, with an average income, at $27,400, that is 40 percent below the legal immigrant or native family income of about $47,700.”34 Although undocumented workers send billions of dollars back home to Mexico, the remittances come back to boost the U.S. economy.35 In 2005, remittances exceeded $19 billion, enabling the poor and working classes in Mexico to purchase consumer goods made in


33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 35.

35 Ibid., 33.
Therefore, Democrats are in support of an earned legalization program because they argue that illegal immigrants “work hard, stay out of trouble, obey our laws (other than the immigration laws, of course), help their families, and desire the opportunity to legalize their status.” As a nation of immigrants, advocates declare that in the long run, the United States “benefits economically, culturally, and socially from immigration, whether legal or illegal.” As the land of opportunity, the United States in particular benefits from the “brain drain” wherein highly skilled workers from developing nations immigrate to America for work. Also, Democrats claim that earned legalization is not meant to encourage future waves of illegal immigration.

Opponents of an earned legalization program support earlier claims by neorestrictionist groups. They argue that earned legalization “will spark increased illegal immigration, spur population growth, and place further stress on development, on already overcrowded schools, and on water shortage problems in the Southwest.” Similarly, public opinion polls express fears that illegal immigration is overburdening the public education system, health and welfare services, and the criminal justice

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37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 56.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 33.
system.\textsuperscript{41} In \textit{The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform}, James R. Edwards Jr. and James G. Gimpel explain that immigrants today face a far greater skill deficit with their lack of education.\textsuperscript{42} Economist Vernon Briggs alleges:

Illegal immigrants hold an estimated 10 to 15 million jobs, about 8 percent of the workforce, and many such jobs are ‘off the books,’ meaning that the government does not receive an estimated $35 billion a year in income tax collections.\textsuperscript{43}

Moreover, neorestrictionists fear that a legalization or amnesty program would diminish “Fortress America,” thereby creating a sympathetic image of the United States in the post 9/11 world.\textsuperscript{44} The National Governors Association and the National Conference of State Legislatures were also against the “top-down approach and unfunded mandate of the proposed legalization program.”\textsuperscript{45} Critics fear that illegal immigrants “take away jobs from native-born citizens.”\textsuperscript{46}

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (CIRA, S.2611), a Senate bill introduced in the 109\textsuperscript{th} Congress (2005-2006) by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) in 2006, and co-sponsored by Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Sen. Mel Martinez (R-FL), Sen. John

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} LeMay, \textit{Illegal Immigration: A Reference Handbook}, 56.
\item \textsuperscript{42} James R. Edwards Jr. and James G. Gimpel, \textit{The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform} (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 9.
\item \textsuperscript{43} LeMay, \textit{Illegal Immigration: A Reference Handbook}, 35.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 56.
\end{itemize}
McCain (R-AZ), Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS) would have provided amnesty to the majority of illegal immigrants currently living in the United States if enacted.\(^{47}\) The Senate bill passed on April 7, 2006. But, the parallel House bill (H.R. 4437) would have dealt with immigration differently. Neither bill became law because they failed to pass the conference committee. The end of the 109\(^{th}\) Congress on January 3, 2007, marked the death of both bills.

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act would have radically changed immigration legislation if passed by Congress. According to Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation:

> CIRA offers amnesty and citizenship to 85 percent of the nation’s current 11.9 million illegal immigrants. Under the plan, illegal immigrants who have been in the U.S. for five years or more (60 percent of illegals) would be granted immediate amnesty. Illegal immigrants who have been in the country between two and five years (25 percent of illegals) could travel to one of 16 ‘ports of entry,’ where they would receive amnesty and lawful work permits. In total, the bill would grant amnesty to 85 percent of the current illegal immigrant population, or some 10 million individuals.\(^{48}\)

Once illegal immigrants have been granted amnesty, they would remain in provisional status for six years before receiving Legal Permanent Residence (LPR). LPR status grants the right to remain in the United States permanently. After five years, persons

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with LPR status have the right to become naturalized citizens. Once naturalized, these persons can vote in U.S. elections and receive government benefits issued to native-born citizens. In addition, spouses and dependent children of these persons would have the right to enter the U.S. and become naturalized citizens. Under this amnesty program, there would be no cap or limit to the number of undocumented immigrants, spouses, and dependents receiving LPR status.49

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act also called for a temporary guest worker program for legal immigrants. However, Rector declares that “there is nothing temporary about this program; nearly all ‘guest workers’ would have the right to become permanent residents and then citizens.”50 Under this guest worker program, U.S. companies would sponsor foreign workers to immigrate to the U.S. for up to six years. The bill would grant 325,000 H-2C visas for the first year, with a twenty percent exponential escalator provision for subsequent years.51 If guest workers learned English or are enrolled in an English class by their fourth year of employment, they could request for LPR status and have the opportunity to remain in the U.S. permanently. After five years of LPR status, guest workers could then become naturalized citizens. Similarly, spouses and minor children of guest workers could petition for LPR status

49 Rector, “Senate Immigration Bill Would Allow 100 Million New Legal Immigrants over the Next Twenty Years.”

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.
and then receive naturalized citizenship after five years. Essentially, the guest worker program would be an “open border provision” that encourages a flood of guest workers and their dependents to immigrate and become U.S. citizens.\textsuperscript{52} According to Rector, “the maximum number of legal immigrants entering the United States “would be almost 200 million over twenty years—over 180 million more legal immigrants than [the] current law permits.”\textsuperscript{53} Immigration control policy over the last eighty years would have radically changed under the CIRA.\textsuperscript{54}

On May 9, 2007, Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) reintroduced the bill during the 110\textsuperscript{th} session of Congress. The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 (S.1348) was also co-sponsored by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Sen. Robert Menéndez (D-NJ), Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and Sen. Ken Salazar (D-CO). On June 7, 2007, the “bill failed a cloture motion, preventing consideration of the bill in the Senate by roll call vote.”\textsuperscript{55} Once again, the bill never became law.\textsuperscript{56}

Essentially, the CIRA in either version “would give amnesty to 10 million illegal immigrants and quintuple the rate of legal immigration” to the United States. Such

\textsuperscript{52} Rector, “Senate Immigration Bill Would Allow 100 Million New Legal Immigrants over the Next Twenty Years.”
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
proposals would still alarm both social liberals and conservatives. Democrats favor an earned legalization pathway to citizenship instead of rewarding amnesty to illegal immigrants. Likewise, social conservatives are unlikely to support an “open border provision” that would dramatically increase the number of legal immigrants entering the United States. These proposed measures fall short of comprehensive immigration reform. Therefore, a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants presents a practical solution to the ongoing immigration debate.

The corps model would offer far-reaching benefits while achieving comprehensive immigration reform. A public work program for national service and conservation would promote development, protect the nation’s land and resources, and sustain the welfare system. Under the corps model, illegal immigrants may earn the rights to citizenship by investing in their communities through public work programs, green job acts, and by relieving disaster-stricken communities. Moreover, a corps-based federal work program could generate taxable incomes, health care benefits, and provide other social services such as vocational training, English language instruction, and citizenship classes to the undocumented.

Furthermore, this legalization program would deter illegal immigration to the United States and boost border security. Like the CCC, this corps-based federal work program is meant to be a temporary agency that would only put illegal immigrants currently living in the United States on an orderly and socially acceptable path towards
citizenship. A federally subsidized public work program modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps would also put in place the necessary oversight in creating an employment verification system, maintaining fair wages, issuing lawful work permits, and in terminating the job magnet or “under-the-table” work to prevent future waves of illegal immigration to the United States. By creating a tough, but fair pathway to legalization, the Department of Homeland Security and other law enforcement can focus on securing the borders and on averting threats that would reassert the image of “Fortress America” to the world.

The pathway to legalizing undocumented immigrants is a colossal one and the creation of a corps based federal work program could also generate more jobs for legal citizens. By revitalizing this Depression Era public work program, the corps movement can be used to stimulate the economy during the current recession.

A corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants would strengthen the economic, social, and political character of “Fortress America” during tough economic times. Because of the program’s extensive benefits, the corps model would be a comprehensive solution to immigration reform. The 111th Congress dominated by Democrats and the current Obama administration must try again to revive the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act and pass new legislation that creates a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants.
CHAPTER III
THE HISTORY AND LEGACY OF
THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

In *The Shadow of the Mountain*, Edwin G. Hill explains that in the spring of 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed the office of President during the darkest days of the Great Depression. According to the American Federation of Labor, approximately 13,689,000 Americans were unemployed and “one wage earner out of four was without a job and had no hope of finding one.” Millions were also underemployed or worked part-time. “Living conditions were at an all time low [with] poor housing, not enough food, minimal health care, [and] insufficient clothing.” In order to combat this economic and social crisis, President Roosevelt proposed an emergency relief plan to the 73rd Congress and to the American people.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was the brainchild of President Roosevelt that was used to alleviate unemployment during the Great Depression. In *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, John A. Salmond proclaims

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., xiv.
“that more than any other New Deal agency [the CCC] bore the personal stamp of President Roosevelt. Without him, relief work in the woods may have remained only an idea.”  

In his 1932 Democratic presidential nomination speech, President Roosevelt introduced his plans for national service and conservation. His land policy to fight a future of soil erosion and timber famine would be used to create jobs for three million men. In Robert D. Leighninger Jr.’s *Long Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal*, he explains:

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was the first of the New Deal building programs. It was an original and very personal creation by the new president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and became one of the most, if not the most, popular of the New Deal programs. This popularity was expressed both in politics and in national opinion polls.  

Under President Roosevelt’s leadership, the CCC became a practical solution for employing America’s dispossessed youth.

In a message to Congress, President Roosevelt sought to establish a civilian conservation corps on March 21, 1933. The primary duties of the corps would be confined to forestry, erosion, flood control, and other related projects. In Harold Dudley and A.C. Oliver Jr.’s *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, the authors relate:

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A bill was prepared which incorporated the ideas suggested by the President’s message. This bill, officially known as ‘An Act for the relief of unemployment through the performance of useful public works and other purposes’ was passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the President before the close of the inaugural month.6

Leighninger reveals that a “bill was drafted in five hours by a team including four cabinet heads and sent to Congress. It was passed and signed in ten days.”7 With Executive Order No. 6101, issued by the President on April 5, 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps swiftly became a reality.8 The Executive Order:

1) appointed a Director of Emergency Conservation Work, 2) provided that an advisory council of four should be established, consisting of a representative of the Secretary of War, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Secretary of Labor, and 3) transferred $10,000,000 for use by the Director of Emergency Conservation Work.9

President Roosevelt appointed Robert Fechner, Vice President of the International Association of Machinists, as the Director of Emergency Conservation Work.10 The Departments of Labor, Agriculture, War, and the Interior would spearhead the massive CCC relief program.11 “The Department of Labor was directed to select the men for enrollment; the War Department was to enroll the men, feed, clothe, house, and


7 Leighninger, Long Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal, 12.


9 Dudley and Oliver Jr., This New America: The Story of the C.C.C., 21.

10 Ibid.

11 Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study, 12.
condition them, and transport them to camps; the Departments of Agriculture and
Interior, through their various bureaus, were to select work projects, to supervise the
work, and to administer the camps." 12 Extraordinary mobilization was required to
launch the CCC.

According to Fechner, the CCC boys “sloughed off bitterness and discontent,
bred by the depression, and entered enthusiastically into the life of the camps.” 13 CCC
camps were organized into nine corps areas: the Northern Region, the Rocky Mountain
Region, the Southwestern Region, the Intermountain Region, the California Region, the
North Pacific Region, the Southern Region, the Eastern Region, and the North Central
Region. 14 Henry Rich, of Alexandria, Virginia, was chosen as the first corpsmember by
the Department of Labor and enrolled by the War Department on April 7, 1933. 15 “On
April 17, just twelve days after the CCC was officially inaugurated, the first work camp
was set up by the War Department in the beautiful George Washington National Forest
near Luray, Virginia, and its members began work under the supervision of the United
States Forest Service.” 16 CCC enrollees were typically from large cities and:

Only unemployed and unmarried young men between the ages of 18 and
25 who were citizens of the United States and who wished to allot a

13 Dudley and Oliver Jr., *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, xi.
15 Hill, *In the Shadow of the Mountain*, xv.
16 Dudley and Oliver Jr., *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, 22.
substantial portion of their basic $30 monthly cash allowance for the assistance of their needy and dependent families were eligible for selection as C.C.C. junior enrollees.¹⁷

The army assembled two hundred men into camps and put them through two weeks of conditioning.¹⁸ These men quickly adjusted to life in the camps. At first, men were housed in army tents and then “permanent barracks, headquarters, recreation and mess halls were erected, and the men became more accustomed to life in camp and work in the woods.”¹⁹

In order to alleviate widespread unemployment during the Depression Era, speed, above all was needed.²⁰ “The accomplishment of the President’s plan to have 250,000 men at work in the forests by [the early summer of 1933] would require feats of organization, construction, and mobilization never before attempted in the United States during peacetime.”²¹ According to Dudley and Oliver Jr., “it was the most rapid large scale mobilization of men our country has ever known.”²² Under this massive New Deal program, interagency cooperation was put to the test.

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¹⁷ Dudley and Oliver Jr., *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, 22.


¹⁹ Dudley and Oliver Jr., *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, 23.


²¹ Ibid.

²² Dudley and Oliver Jr., *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, 23.
Inevitably, disagreements and misunderstandings arose between government agencies. The War Department and the Forest Service “clashed directly over matters of fiscal procedure, over methods of camp construction, and in general over their particular areas of responsibility within the CCC organization.”\(^\text{23}\) Despite “administrative confusion and structural shortcomings,” the CCC was off to a good start.\(^\text{24}\)

Dramatic improvements were made on the national landscape through the employment of the nation’s dispossessed youth. The CCC celebrated its one year anniversary on April 7, 1934. During that first year:

The work included construction of 25,000 miles of truck trails, 15,000 miles of telephone lines, 420,000 erosion check dams; disease and insect control on 3,000,000 acres of forest; 98,000,000 seedlings planted, forest stand improvement on a million acres; and 687,000 man-days of fire fighting.\(^\text{25}\)

Furthermore, “the Army had successfully undertaken the largest peacetime mobilization of men the United States had ever seen, had built more than 1,300 camps, and had installed recruits in all of them.”\(^\text{26}\) Ultimately, the CCC would bring benefits to the “national domain and to the moral and spiritual welfare of those employed in it.”\(^\text{27}\) The program rehabilitated enrollees by helping them overcome spiritual and physical

\(^{23}\) Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, 38.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 45.

\(^{25}\) Dudley and Oliver Jr., *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, 23.

\(^{26}\) Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, 45.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 13.
From 1933-1942, the CCC would continue their monumental work to preserve and protect the nation’s land and resources through a variety of services. After nine years, three million men “had served in the greatest conservation program ever undertaken by any nation.”29 Government relief programs such as the CCC became obsolete with the outbreak of World War II. In The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression, Leslie Alexander Lacy declares that “the last days were difficult, and the demise [of the CCC] was inevitable.”30 Salmond explains:

The agency was dependent for the bulk of its enrollees on the unskilled and unemployed. In the full employment situation of the war, its source of supply no longer existed.31 Hill reveals that “ninety percent of the 3,000,000 CCC enrollees later served their country in wartime.”32 The CCC had prepared these men for war because “they were accustomed to barracks life and knew how to get along with others. And, they were disciplined, having learned not only how to take orders, but also how to give them.”33 Military services, factories, railroads, and farms contributed to the upswing of the U.S.

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28 Dudley and Oliver Jr., This New America: The Story of the C.C.C., 24.
29 Hill, In the Shadow of the Mountain, xvii.
31 Ibid., 218
32 Hill, In the Shadow of the Mountain, 136.
33 Ibid.
economy by the late 1930s. Therefore, the “CCC’s primary function as a welfare agency had become outmoded.”

Moreover, Lacy reveals that attempts to revitalize the CCC failed because “the CCC’s identification with welfare and relief was too complete to permit a change.” To many Americans and legislators, the CCC had already fulfilled its purpose. In due course, “the Civilian Conservation Corps came to an end on June 30, 1942, and began the task of discharging its personnel and disposing of its assets to the army.” But, the legacy of the CCC would live on.

Although the CCC never became a permanent agency, corps programs continue to serve as a model of reform and as a template for success in solving economic and social issues. According to Lacy:

[The CCC] marked the first attempt by the federal government to provide some specific solution for the problems of youth in an increasingly urban society. In its makeshift, loose way it was a pathfinder, the precursor of more sophisticated programs and ideas.

Today, a government relief program modeled after the CCC could be used to legalize undocumented immigrants in the United States through the pathway of national service and conservation.

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35 Ibid.


37 Ibid., 208.

38 Ibid., 222.
THE LEGACY OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

The impact of the CCC on the national landscape and on the character of three million Americans is immeasurable. Dudley and Oliver Jr., explain:

The C.C.C. has brought about a spiritual and moral development of the men who have been given an opportunity to learn the value of a good day’s work. Life in the camps provides the enrollees with many opportunities for self-development and improvement. On the work projects he may learn any of a number of trades and skills.39

According to Lacy, “more than one hundred and fifty types of jobs were done, although most can be classed as forest protection and conservation, soil conservation, recreational development, aid to grazing, aid to wildlife, flood control, reclamation, drainage, and disaster and emergency relief.”40 The CCC also engaged in structural improvement, transportation, and other miscellaneous tasks.41 Hill declares that “the total list of projects undertaken and completed by the CCC would fill several books.”42 During its short tenure, the CCC engaged in countless conservation, infrastructure improvement, and national service projects across nine Corps Areas in the United States.43

39 Dudley and Oliver Jr., This New America: The Story of the C.C.C., 27.
40 Lacy, The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression, 139.
42 Hill, In the Shadow of the Mountain, 136.
One of the greatest accomplishments of the CCC was forest protection and improvement. Remarkably, more than half of all the forest planting in America is credited to “Roosevelt’s Tree Army.” Hill claims:

Roosevelt’s Tree Army had reversed the traditional pattern of using up or wasting the nation’s natural resources at a faster rate than they were being replenished. Approximately 200 major kinds of conservation work had been undertaken on forest, agricultural, park, and other lands.

Overall, the work of the CCC has made a lasting impact on the nation’s land.

As protectors of the nation’s land, the CCC courageously fought forest fires. Salmond reveals that by 1942, “the CCC had spent nearly 6.5 million days fighting fires, a period equivalent to the constant efforts of more than 16,000 men, working for a whole year on the basis of an eight-hour day.” Moreover, “tangible accomplishments of the Corps in the field of fire prevention were the construction of roads, trails, telephone lines, and lookout towers which facilitated communication between fire-fighting units and enabled men, supplies, and equipment to be transported faster.” With its unique ability to mobilize, the CCC became a vehicle for disaster and emergency relief.

The work of the CCC became an integral part of national emergency management. Hill explains:

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47 Ibid., 122.
Everywhere in America, the CCC provided assistance during emergencies, saving lives and property when natural disasters struck. Enrollees were ready and eager to help wherever floods, fires, hurricanes, or snowstorms threatened communities. Also, on numerous occasions, they searched for downed planes or missing persons in mountains, deserts, or forests.48

Precedents set by the CCC remain in force with corps programs today.

In addition, the CCC made vast improvements on the nation’s forests.

Corpsmembers constructed roads and trails while promoting greater timber utilization.49 Forest management increased with the construction of warehouses, garages, overnight cabins, shelters, tool houses, and storage boxes. The CCC also beautified hundreds of camping grounds by building small dams that converted streams into lakes.50

Structural improvements also enhanced recreational facilities. The building of deflectors, dams, and riffles were used for stream improvement. Such improvements aided fishing conditions. Moreover, the construction of winter sports facilities such as ski jumps and runs “met an increasing public demand.”51 In some of the most famous national parks, the CCC developed recreational facilities “from Mt. Rushmore to Death Valley, and Mammoth Cave to Mesa Verde, to name just a few.”52

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48 Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, 139.

49 Ibid., 123.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Hill, *In the Shadow of the Mountain*, 140.
Another important aspect of CCC work was reforestation. Salmond reports that
the CCC “re-grassed thousands of acres, dug new water holes and improved existing
ones, built storage dams for stock water, killed uncounted millions of prairie dogs,
pocket gophers, and jackrabbits, and constructed fences and bridges.”
Services performed by the CCC were extensive and advantageous to the nation’s public lands and
natural resources.

Additionally, the CCC undertook soil conservation. The work of CCC members
“fell into three categories: the demonstration of practical methods of soil conservation to
farmers, actual work upon private land in co-operation with landowners, and the
development and improvement of erosion control techniques through research.”
During the 1930s, the CCC boys played a significant role in tackling the “Dust Bowl”
by planting windbreaks or shelterbreaks in the nation’s central region. Because of their
work, members of the CCC became known as the “Soil Soldiers.”

Under the Department of the Interior’s National Parks Service, the CCC was
commissioned to improve, protect, and construct national parks. “National Park
Service camps built bridges, installed telephone lines, constructed stoves, fireplaces, and

54 Ibid.
55 Hill, In the Shadow of the Mountain, 139.
56 Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study, 126.
picnic tables, and made dams, lakes, and swimming pools.”

Through the construction of roads and trails, many park areas were made accessible to the public. Entirely new parks were constructed by the CCC with the government purchase of land. Also, many CCC camps preserved and restored around four thousand historical sites and monuments.

This comprehensive relief program made vast improvements on the nation’s land in nine major corps areas. According to a 1941 study prepared for Congress, “the future physical value of the work completed by the CCC exceeded $1,750,000,000.” Overall, the Federal Security Agency reported that the CCC had accomplished the following from 1933-1941:

- 38,087 vehicular bridges
- 26,368,296 rods of fencing
- 83,548 miles of new telephone lines
- 23,725 new water sources
- 122,169 miles of truck trails and minor roads
- 5,875,578 erosion check dams
- 2,246,100,600 trees planted
- 3,998,328 acres of forest stand improvement
- 6,304,211 man days fighting forest fires
- 6,192,269 man days of fire presuppression and prevention
- 20,934,581 acres of tree and plant disease and pest control operations.

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58 Hill, *In the Shadow of the Mountain*, 140.

59 Ibid., 138.

60 Ibid.
True to President Roosevelt’s intentions, the CCC had created a “future of national wealth” for the country and its people.\textsuperscript{61} Lacy asserts:

The CCC was the greatest blessing ever to come to the forest, soil, and water of America. . . . It deserves to be recorded in American history as a noble achievement in the conservation of natural resources and human conservation, as well as an experiment in the practical education of young people.\textsuperscript{62}

The economic and social implications of the CCC are far-reaching even today.

**THE EDUCATION POLICY OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS**

According to Salmon, a new phase of CCC expansion began with the 1933 policy decision to develop an educational program for the CCC. President Roosevelt approved a plan for a nationwide, Washington-directed, CCC education service that would be guided by the camp commanders.\textsuperscript{63} The educational objectives according to Dr. Howard W. Oxley, CCC Director of Education, were:

1) to eliminate illiteracy, 2) to remove deficiencies in common school subjects, 3) to provide systematic training on camp and work projects, 4) to provide general vocational training in the camp school or in nearby schools, 5) to provide vocational and hobby activities, 6) to provide cultural and general education opportunities, 7) to provide character and citizenship training, and 8) to assist youth in finding employment.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{61} Hill, *In the Shadow of the Mountain*, xvi.


\textsuperscript{63} Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, 47.

\textsuperscript{64} Dudley and Oliver Jr., *This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.*, 47.
Formal education was held in the evenings and participation was purely voluntary.

According to Leighninger:

Insofar as the CCC was a relief program, education might be seen as the best way to make sure boys would never again be on relief. But Roosevelt and Fechner kept the focus of the working day on conservation and relegated education the evenings. Thus they got the best of both of worlds.\textsuperscript{65}

More than 70 per cent of the men enrolled in one or more classes.\textsuperscript{66} Corpsmembers also made constructive use of their leisure time by engaging in music, drama, debating, newspaper management, leather craft, metal work, modeling, and furniture-making.\textsuperscript{67}

Since educational backgrounds differed greatly, “a wide variety of courses had to be scheduled, both academic and vocational, in order best to meet the needs of the enrollees.”\textsuperscript{68} Each camp had an average of eighteen courses. Classes ranged from “bricklaying to trigonometry, from wood carving to plane surveying, from spelling to debating, and so on.”\textsuperscript{69} Dudley and Oliver Jr. explain:

Under the supervision of the company commander and in cooperation with the technical services, and educational adviser in each camp [developed] a program which [provided] the enrollees with instruction along the lines of their personal needs and interests.\textsuperscript{70}


\textsuperscript{66} Dudley and Oliver Jr., \textit{This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.}, 27.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{68} Salmond, \textit{The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study}, 51.

\textsuperscript{69} Dudley and Oliver Jr., \textit{This New America: The Story of the C.C.C.}, 47.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 27.
The camp commander’s commitment and ability to meet the needs of his enrollees determined the success of an educational program.

Education became an invaluable component of the corps program. “Despite military antagonism, directorial apathy, and confused aims and intentions, the CCC education program not only survived its first three years but achieved some measure of success in the process.” 71 The program made great strides in remedial education. By June 1937, “35,000 illiterates had been taught to read and write, more than a thousand youths had gained high school diplomas, and thirty-nine had received college degrees.” 72 Forty universities even offered courses to CCC camps by mail and twenty-six universities granted scholarships to former CCC boys. 73 Colleges affiliated with the CCC’s educational program included the Universities of Nebraska, North Dakota, Texas, Claremont College, California Teachers College at San Francisco, the University of California, University of Kentucky, University of Alabama, University of Virginia and Columbia University. 74

Additionally, corpsmembers received vocational and “on the job” training. “Boys who had never swung a pick nor used an ax now learned to run jack-hammers

71 Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study, 53.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., 54.

74 Dudley and Oliver Jr., This New America: The Story of the C.C.C., 48.
and drive trucks." Although more sophisticated vocational courses such as boiler making and metal work were limited, enrollees left the corps with marketable job skills and promising futures.

A corps based legalization program could provide vocational training, English language training, and citizenship classes to the undocumented. Like the CCC boys, undocumented workers could voluntarily participate in English language instruction. Language and citizenship classes could also be tailored around work schedules. Therefore, the corps model provides the proper framework for legalizing undocumented workers.

The path to legalizing undocumented immigrants is a colossal one. Reminiscent of the CCC’s establishment, interagency cooperation is again vital in solving matters of national crisis. Lacy affirms that the CCC “was certainly one of the better examples of successful cooperation among government agencies, too seldom, before or since.” A federal work program modeled after the CCC provides necessary oversight in creating an employment verification system for illegal immigrants, maintaining fair wages, issuing lawful work permits, and in terminating the job magnet to prevent future waves of illegal immigration. If funded through the treasury, the corps model could also generate taxable incomes, health care benefits, and provide other social services such as vocational training, English language instruction, and citizenship classes to the

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75 Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, 54.

undocumented. The creation of a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants aligns with President Barack Obama’s energy and environmental initiative to “create millions of new green jobs.” Separate legislation apart from the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act must be enacted to revitalize the corps model in solving economic, social, and political problems facing America. Like the original bill, this new legislation could pass swiftly in Congress due to the program’s legacy and multi-faceted appeal. Therefore, the corps model provides a sound framework for comprehensive immigration reform.

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CHAPTER IV
THE INCLUSION OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS
IN THE CORPS MOVEMENT TODAY

Today, local, state, and national corps engage at-risk youth, young adults, and professionals in national service and conservation. One hundred and thirty-six state corps operate in forty-two states and in the District of Columbia.\(^1\) According to The Corps Network, over twenty-six thousand corps members in local and state programs contribute more than sixteen million hours of service annually.\(^2\) National corps programs under AmeriCorps are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency. AmeriCorps consists of three primary programs—AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). Every year, AmeriCorps programs engage about “75,000 Americans in service to meet critical needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other areas.”\(^3\)

In 1990, President George Herbert Walker Bush signed into law the first National Service Act. “It also formally launched AmeriCorps, a network of national

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\(^2\) Ibid.

service programs that engage Americans in intensive service to meet the nation’s critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.\textsuperscript{4} In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the National and Community Service Trust Act that established the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The act brought domestic community service programs under one central organization.\textsuperscript{5} Since 1994:

Nearly 500,000 AmeriCorps members have served with thousands of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations nationwide—from small community groups to nationally known organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the Red Cross, and Boys and Girls of Clubs of America.\textsuperscript{6}

Other national partners include the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Forest Service. Today, this independent federal agency continues “to foster a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America.”\textsuperscript{7}

Local and state corps programs enlist young adults, formerly incarcerated youth, high school dropouts, and youth with substance abuse problems. These corpsmembers come to the corps looking for a second chance to succeed in life.\textsuperscript{8} In return,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[5] Ibid.
\item[6] AmeriCorps, “AmeriCorps General Background.”
\item[7] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
corpsmembers receive a modest stipend, significant educational opportunities, career preparation, and the opportunity to invest in their communities through national service and conservation.⁹

National AmeriCorps programs attract members of all ages who are U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or lawful permanent residents.¹⁰ AmeriCorps State and National members must be at least seventeen years of age and individual programs may require additional qualifications. The AmeriCorps VISTA program has no upper age limit and seeks members with college degrees or who have at least three years of work experience. Retirees with extensive experience are also encouraged to apply to the AmeriCorps VISTA program. AmeriCorps NCCC members are young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four with no particular education level. Upon successful completion of their 1,700 hours of service, AmeriCorps members “receive an AmeriCorps Education Award of up to $4,725 to pay for college or graduate school or to pay back qualified student loans.”¹¹ Members who serve part-time may qualify for a pro-rated or partial AmeriCorps Education Award. AmeriCorps members also receive meals, uniforms, training, and student loan deferment during their service. Health benefits cover “all injuries and/or illnesses suffered during service and most pharmacy

⁹ The Corps Network, “Civic Justice Corps (One-pager).”


¹¹ AmeriCorps, “AmeriCorps General Background.”
needs.” A modest annual living allowance of $4,000 is also awarded to about half of the program’s members. Corps members may also receive up to $400 a month for childcare expenses.

Corps across the nation continue to engage in national service and conservation.

The Corps Network asserts:

Today’s Service and Conservation Corps provide a wealth of conservation, infrastructure improvement, and human service projects—those identified by communities as important. Some Corps improve and preserve our public lands and national parks. Others provide critical energy conservation services, including weatherization, restore natural habitats and create urban parks and gardens. Still others provide disaster preparation and recovery to under-resourced communities. Finally, Corps raise the quality of life in low-income communities by renovating deteriorating housing and providing support to in-school and after school education programs.

As descendants of the Depression Era’s Civilian Conservation Corps, today’s service and conservation corps remain true to the legacy of the CCC.

AmeriCorps is composed of three main programs, namely AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC. Such programs offer a variety of services. AmeriCorps members:

Tutor and mentor disadvantaged youth, fight illiteracy, improve health services, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and

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streams, manage or operate after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters, and build organizational capacity.\footnote{14}

The AmeriCorps State and National program supports local service programs with “critical community needs.”\footnote{15} The AmeriCorps VISTA program is specifically designed to alleviate poverty by providing full-time corpsmembers who create and expand programs for community organizations and public agencies. AmeriCorps NCCC is a program that “strengthens communities while developing leaders through direct, team-based national and community service.”\footnote{16}

\begin{center}
AMERICORPS NATIONAL CIVILIAN COMMUNITY CORPS (NCCC): TODAY’S CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS PROGRAM
\end{center}

AmeriCorps NCCC was “drawn from the successful models of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and the U.S. military.”\footnote{17} Moreover, AmeriCorps NCCC “is built on the belief that civic responsibility is an inherent duty of all citizens and that national service programs work effectively with local communities to address pressing needs.” The program partners with nonprofit organizations, state and local agencies, faith-based, and other community organizations in every state and U.S.


\footnote{15}Ibid.

\footnote{16}Ibid.

territory. In addition, AmeriCorps NCCC partners with schools, local municipalities, national and state parks, and Indian tribes. Corpsmembers are required to complete 1,700 hours of service, including eighty hours of independent service activities that can be completed off campus.

AmeriCorps NCCC members are eighteen to twenty-four year old men and women who live and train at five regional campuses located in Denver Colorado; Sacramento, California; Perry Point, Maryland; Vicksburg, MS; and Vinton, Iowa. AmeriCorps NCCC requires:

An intensive, [ten to twelve] month commitment. Members serve in teams of ten to twelve and are assigned to projects throughout the region served by the campus. They are trained in CPR, first aid, public safety, and other skills before beginning their first service project.18

The regional campuses prepare AmeriCorps NCCC members for team-based service projects relating to the environment, education, public safety, unmet needs, homeland security, and disaster relief. Projects in disaster and emergency relief are given precedence over other projects. “Members have responded to every major disaster since 1994, including the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and hurricanes of 2005.”19

AmeriCorps NCCC members are expected “to serve effectively with a team of individuals from and within communities of diverse cultural, ethnic, economic,

18 AmeriCorps, “AmeriCorps NCC.”

These team-based service projects provide corpsmembers with valuable skills and a variety of training. For example:

Members who build houses will learn the fundamentals about framing a house, installing sheetrock, etc. Members who work with children in schools will learn about the most effective way to tutor in reading or math. Members will also receive CPR/First Aid and Disaster Relief certification training from the Red Cross, and leadership, conflict management, team-building, community building, and other training. Members can also qualify for firefighting training by passing an endurance test. Approximately, sixteen percent of AmeriCorps NCCC members are trained as firefighters. Each team performs about four to six projects a year and each project normally lasts from six to eight weeks.

In order to foster a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America, AmeriCorps NCCC members perform physical labor despite “stressful environments and adverse weather conditions.” Usually, corpsmembers perform long hours beyond the normal eight-hour work day. Service hours may vary because of particular projects:

They can range from serving three weeks straight for 12 to 14 hours a day (such as disaster relief work or firefighting, where the need is great) to serving hours that resemble more of a regular work week (Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM).

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
Since AmeriCorps NCCC members engage in disaster and emergency relief, they must be able to deploy to any region served by their campus on a moment’s notice. Therefore, “flexibility, initiative, and an open mind are key to having a successful AmeriCorps NCCC experience.”25 The corps model can be used to put undocumented immigrants on a tough, but fair pathway to citizenship.

AmeriCorps programs have been vital in rebuilding the hurricane battered communities of the Gulf Coast because “they are particularly well-suited to meeting the nation’s disaster service needs.”26 Destruction caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, have left many homes uninhabitable. In addition, hazardous debris have polluted neighborhoods, closed down schools, and drained support services. Gulf Coast states that were severely impacted by the hurricanes, namely Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama remain among the poorest in the nation. Therefore, hundreds of AmeriCorps members are needed in the Gulf Coast:

To provide intake and referral services for people displaced and homeless; build and to enhance the capacity of volunteer centers to ensure a ready source of volunteers available to address community needs; ensure that volunteers and donated goods are properly distributed where and when they are needed most; clear debris; and build and renovate homes, schools, and public facilities.27

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Such services are critical to the needs and recovery of the Gulf Coast community.

On the state level, corps continue to provide disaster relief and emergency services. More than one hundred young adults from seven state corps participate in the *Corps Respond* program. Programs such as *Corps Respond* “devote over half of their service to emergency preparedness, long-term recovery, and response to floods, wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other natural disasters.”

Corpsmembers also train local students and community members in disaster preparation, response, and recovery. Additionally, these corpsmembers engage in other “valuable environmental restoration and conservation projects benefitting public lands and local communities.”

Corpsmembers also preserve and maintain parks, streams, and trails.

With the growing corps movement and focus on the green economy, undocumented immigrants may engage in disaster relief and emergency services to legalize their status in the United States. In *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, John A. Salmond reveals that “such work, besides its immediate humanitarian value, was of tremendous assistance in firmly establishing a favorable public impression of the CCC.”

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29 Ibid.

combine “the best practices of civilian service with the best aspects of military service, including leadership development and team building.”

Seventy two percent of AmeriCorps members continue to volunteer in their communities even after they have completed their term of service. Likewise, undocumented immigrants may improve their image in the United States by offering these critical services in their communities.

Undocumented immigrants provide complementary skills to the corps movement. Salmond declares that the 1933 policy decision to enroll 24,375 local woodsmen as technical assistants to the project supervisors was vital to the success of the CCC. These “local experienced men” or L.E.M.’s were assigned to each camp and their primary responsibility was to supervise untrained youth. Undocumented immigrants may already have skills in the farming, lumber, and construction industries. Therefore, such skills can readily reinforce the corps movement.

In the MSNBC news article “Ike areas rely on Latino labor to rebuild,” the Associated Press reports that Latino immigrants are cleaning up the Texas coast. Homeowners who are “looking for quick, cheap labor,” pick up these workers on the

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31 AmeriCorps*NCCC, AmeriCorps*NCCC Member Handbook, 4.

32 AmeriCorps, “AmeriCorps General Background.”

33 Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study, 34.

streets.\textsuperscript{35} Many of these workers are in the United States illegally. According to the Associated Press, “Ike brought a wide swath of destruction, and with it the prospect of more work, higher wages and a respite from the ever-present threat of deportation.”\textsuperscript{36} Other day laborers are legal residents whose regular jobs were disrupted in the wake of the hurricane. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, thousands of Latino immigrants also “streamed to New Orleans for jobs in construction, carpentry, and cleanup.”\textsuperscript{37} These workers tow away fallen trees, clean up yards and driveways, repair punctured roofs, and install wallboard for houses. Despite these job opportunities:

There are fears of abuse and exploitation of workers, and rumors that immigration officials will be poised at job sites to arrest the undocumented. After Katrina, many Latino workers in New Orleans reported cases of unsafe working conditions and employers who cheated them out of money earned.\textsuperscript{38}

Regrettably, day laborers are confronted with the most adverse working conditions as they face “dishonest employers and immigration roundups.”\textsuperscript{39} Therefore, the inclusion of undocumented immigrants in the corps movement today presents a viable solution to the complex immigration problem in the United States.

\textsuperscript{35} The Associated Press, “Ike areas rely on Latino labor to rebuild.”
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
Programs like AmeriCorps ensure the safety of its workers. “Team leaders are responsible for the day-to-day safety of their teams and for maintaining a safe working environment.” Team and unit leaders monitor members “to ensure that they are using safety equipment properly and responsibly.” In addition, AmeriCorps project directors train project sponsors in the use of unfamiliar equipment and present safety instructions. Team leaders and members also receive ongoing training in accident prevention, first aid, and CPR. Such safety precautions would prevent the exploitation of the undocumented workers while maintaining fair wages.

Corpsmembers in local and state programs receive significant educational opportunities such as vocational training and a chance to earn their General Education Development credentials (GED). Some corpsmembers even go on to higher education. The AmeriCorps Education Award can be used for college tuition costs or to pay back qualified student loans. Since 1994, more than one billion dollars in Education Awards have been granted to corpsmembers in local, state, and national programs.

The educational component of the corps model is also complementary to the needs of undocumented immigrants. Under the corps model, voluntary English language instruction and citizenship classes could be tailored around the work schedules of

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40 AmeriCorps*NCCC, *AmeriCorps*NCCC Member Handbook*, 60.

41 Ibid.
undocumented immigrants. Overall, the corps model sets in place a practical solution for legalizing undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Services and training under the corps model can be used to put immigrants who have entered the country illegally on a tough, but fair pathway towards citizenship. Like AmeriCorps members, undocumented immigrants can function as corpsmembers by engaging in public work programs and in disaster and emergency relief. Through humanitarian aid, undocumented immigrants may improve their image in the United States. Eight-six percent of former AmeriCorps members claim “that their service experience and training helped to a great or moderate extent in their [jobs], educational pursuits, or community service activities.”42 Their service experience and training would foster a culture of citizenship and responsibility in the United States.

Moreover, the corps model provides the necessary oversight in legalizing undocumented immigrants. The Corporation for National and Community Service’s FY 2009 budget of $829.68 million provides crucial funding to the corps movement today.43 The government may use the CNCS and other agencies to launch a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants. The program can be used to create an employment verification system that would set in place fair wages, lawful work permits, and terminate the job magnet for undocumented workers. If federally

42 AmeriCorps, “AmeriCorps General Background.”

administered, this government work program could also generate taxable incomes, health care benefits, and provide other social services such as vocational training, English language instruction, and citizenship classes to the undocumented. The creation of a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants in the United States is a realistic framework for solving complex immigration problems. With the right tools, the government can act swiftly to resolve illegal immigration challenges in the United States.
CHAPTER V

POLICY ADVOCACY FOR A CORPS BASED FEDERAL WORK PROGRAM TO LEGALIZE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

The creation of a corps based federal work program for legalizing undocumented immigrants provides a comprehensive solution to immigration reform while stimulating the economy, protecting the environment, and boosting national security. Undocumented immigrants can be put on an orderly and socially acceptable pathway towards citizenship by engaging in national service and conservation corps programs. The task of legalizing undocumented immigrants is a colossal one and requires increased interagency cooperation and the creation of new jobs to administer corps programs across the country. Under the corps model, undocumented immigrants may earn the rights to citizenship by investing in their communities through public work programs, green job acts, and by relieving disaster stricken communities. By creating a tough, but fair pathway to legalization for undocumented workers already in the country, the Department of Homeland Security and other local law enforcement agencies can concentrate on securing the borders. From a public policy perspective, this legalization program offers a win-win solution to the complex challenges facing America.

Although the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) achieved limited success in legalizing three million undocumented immigrants, the potential of
the program was never fully tapped. This proposed corps based legalization program offers increased potential in today’s struggling economy. A federal work program modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps provides necessary oversight for creating an employment verification system, issuing lawful work permits, and in terminating the job magnet or “under-the-table” work for undocumented immigrants.

Once undocumented immigrants earn the legal rights to citizenship, employer sanctions could then be set in place. Employers should then be bound by law to hire workers who have obtained lawful work permits through the program’s employment verification system. Like the CCC, this legalization program is also meant to be a temporary agency. By having limited terms of service, the program seeks to prevent future waves of illegal immigration to the United States. Therefore, the corps model would provide a viable framework for legalizing the millions of undocumented immigrants who currently reside in the United States.

Moreover, a public works program for national service and conservation would promote development, protect the nation’s land and resources, and sustain the welfare system. Jenifer Smyers, an Associate for Immigration and Refugee Policy for the Church World Service argues that immigrants “need access to health care and other social services, such as English language classes.”1 However, states like Arizona and

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Colorado deny non-emergency health care benefits to undocumented residents.\textsuperscript{2} Also, “English classes around the United States have waiting lists as long as three years due to underfunding and a lack of emphasis both on the local and national level.”\textsuperscript{3} Smyers explains:

> English-language acquisition is particularly important. Without English, newcomers are unable to effectively communicate with most U.S. citizens, which makes it difficult to perform even simple tasks such as buying groceries, finding jobs, or taking classes to learn new skills.\textsuperscript{4}

A corps based federal work program could generate taxable incomes, health care benefits, and provide vocational training, English language instruction, and citizenship classes to the undocumented. This corps based legalization program offers many incentives that could bring undocumented workers out of the shadows and into the legal workforce.

During the current economic recession, times are hard for both legal and undocumented workers in America. Like the CCC, this corps based legalization program could also be used to create jobs for legal and undocumented residents. The task of legalizing undocumented immigrants is an enormous and complex endeavor and demands increased interagency cooperation and government oversight. Federal agencies such as the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, War, the Interior, Homeland Security,


\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
and the Corporation for National and Community Service must be mobilized in order to administer this national corps program. By revitalizing this Depression Era public works program, the corps movement can be used to stimulate the economy. In effect, job prospects for both legal and “legalized” residents would increase with the revival of the economy. After obtaining lawful work permits, “legalized” residents may return to the farming, lumber, and construction industries, but not as cheap, easily exploitable sources of labor.

The corps based federal work program would protect undocumented workers from exploitation and adverse working conditions by maintaining fair wages and safe working environments. Smyers reveals:

Immigrants are underpaid, overworked, and treated poorly. They may be forced to live in miserable conditions, completely cut off from social services available to citizens. Despite these drawbacks, millions of people choose to immigrate to the United States. For many people, the real or perceived advantages clearly outweigh the possible risks.\(^5\)

Consequently, economic migration has become a primary means of survival for many undocumented workers.\(^6\) Undocumented immigrants would find greater incentives to legalize their status under this corps based federal work program rather than to remain in the shadows. Since the corps model sets in place employer sanctions, the “under-the-table” work for undocumented immigrants would diminish and hopefully disappear over


\(^6\) Ibid.
time. Consumers would then have to meet the higher wage and price levels for “legalized” workers. By turning off the job magnet or cheap, easily exploitable sources of labor for undocumented workers, this legalization program could prevent future waves of illegal immigration to the United States.

Many U.S. policymakers and politicians consider undocumented immigrants as “illegal” because they entered the country without the benefit of legal papers. However, employers, civil libertarians, free market economists, and other legislators do not necessarily think of undocumented immigrants as “criminal.” Instead, they regard these undocumented workers as immigrants who are of net economic benefit to the United States. Moreover, Smyers declares that undocumented immigrants “should not be treated like criminals, languishing in prison without access to trial or representation” because most have the desire to work hard in order to provide a better life for their children.7

According to Helene Hayes in *U.S. Immigration Control Policy and the Undocumented*, broken immigration laws have “excluded undocumented immigrants with one hand and beckoned them forth with the other.”8 Therefore, one cannot necessarily argue that undocumented immigrants broke the law when immigration laws

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were already broken. Undocumented workers may also resent being placed in the same
category with “at-risk” youth and young adults who serve in state and local corps
programs. Yet, it is the culture of citizenship and responsibility that ties undocumented
immigrants to the corps movement.

The creation of a corps based federal work program provides the right
framework for legalizing undocumented immigrants. By working the land and by
investing in their communities, undocumented immigrants may earn a sense of
ownership in the United States. According to John A. Salmond in *The Civilian
Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*:

> The CCC gave to its enrollees both a new understanding of their country
> and a faith in its future. Youths from the teeming cities learned something
> of rural America, boys from farms and country hamlets became
> acquainted with the complexities and ethnic variation of their land and its
> people. Both emerged from the camp experience with a greater
> understanding of America, and of Americans.9

Therefore, a corps based legalization program would be instrumental in fostering this
culture of citizenship and responsibility in the United States. Undocumented immigrants
may improve their image by following an orderly and socially acceptable path towards
citizenship. National service and conservation corps programs could provide mutual
benefits for undocumented workers and their communities.

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9John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*
Local, state, and national corps programs provide a variety of services across the country. They include developing and protecting public lands and national parks. Corpsmembers also restore natural habitats and build urban parks and gardens. Other corps programs promote energy efficiency and participate in weatherization projects for homes, offices, and especially low-income housing. Other corps activities include disaster preparation, response, and recovery. In addition, corps programs help to alleviate poverty by renovating condemned structures and by providing support to community educational programs.

By creating a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants, the Department of Homeland Security and other law enforcement can focus on securing the borders and on averting terrorist threats. Smyers maintains that “the focus should shift toward extending protections to immigrants” rather than spending lots of time and money to find and deport them. This tough, but fair pathway to citizenship could reassert the image of “Fortress America” to the world during this “storm-door” era of immigration policy. The corps model provides a long-term solution to the national security threats facing America’s borders and illegal immigration problems.

Corps programs have a multi-faceted appeal to legislators and to the American public. The approved FY 2009 budget of $829.68 million for the Corporation for

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National and Community Service demonstrates strong Congressional support for national service.\textsuperscript{11} Recent legislation passed in the Senate and House has favored the expansion of national service and conservation corps programs in the United States. Therefore, legislators are likely to pass laws that apply national service to comprehensive immigration reform.

On March 31, 2009, the House voted 275-149 in favor of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (H.R. 1388) that “would reauthorize and expand national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service.”\textsuperscript{12} The Senate bill also passed in a 79-19 vote on March 26, 2009. President Obama is now expected to sign this “National Landmark National Service Bill” into law.

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, the passage of the House bill on March 31, 2009 marked “seventy-five years to the day after President Roosevelt signed the Civilian Conservation Corps into law.”\textsuperscript{13} Nicola Goren, Acting CEO, for the Corporation for National and Community Service declares that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
during this time of economic crisis, “we need service and volunteering more than ever.”

Even today, the legacy of the CCC continues to make a profound impact on millions of Americans.

Broad bipartisan support for the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in Congress has revitalized the corps movement in the United States. Under the act, AmeriCorps membership will increase from 75,000 to 250,000 positions each year. Goren has also noted the tripling of AmeriCorps applications within the last month.

Separate legislation apart from the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act must be enacted to resolve the economic, social, and political problems facing America. Alan Solomont, Board Chair, for the Corporation for National and Community Service proclaims that widespread bipartisan support for H.R. 1388 and “its remarkably swift journey through Congress, reflect the growing national consensus that service is a powerful response to the economic and social challenges facing America today.”

Like the original CCC bill, legislation to create a corps based legalization program could pass swiftly in Congress due to the program’s sweeping benefits. The creation of a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants also supports U.S. economic, environmental, and national security objectives.

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14 Corporation for National and Community Service, “House Sends National Landmark National Service Bill to President.”

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.
In the stale immigration debate, this corps based legalization program can be a turning point for immigration control policy. Salmond relates:

For most enrollees, enlistment in the CCC had been the final act, the culmination of a long period of despair and helplessness. It proved to be a turning point. The Corps rekindled hope for the future and faith in America and its way of life.\textsuperscript{17}

Similarly, U.S. Representative George Miller (D-CA), Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee affirms:

History has shown that in times of crisis, Americans turn to service and volunteering for healing, for rebuilding and for hope. The spirit and generosity of the American people is one of our nation’s greatest assets.\textsuperscript{18}

The practicality of the corps model offers a brightness of hope in achieving comprehensive immigration reform.

This corps based legalization program aligns with the White House agenda on immigration, economic recovery, energy and the environment, and homeland security. The corps model has the potential to create secure borders, remove incentives to enter the country illegally, and to bring people out of the shadows.\textsuperscript{19} President Obama can create over three million jobs as promised in his American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan by administering this federal work program for undocumented immigrants across the United States.

\textsuperscript{17} Salmond, \textit{The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study}, 132.

\textsuperscript{18} Corporation for National and Community Service, “House Sends National Landmark National Service Bill to President.”

the country. This corps based legalization program also supports the President’s  
energy and environmental initiative to “create millions of new green jobs.” Corps also  
offer weatherization services that could advance the President’s agenda on  
“modernizing more than 75% of federal buildings and [improving] the energy efficiency  
of two million American homes” in order to save consumers and taxpayers billions of  
dollars on energy bills. Similarly, the President’s homeland security agenda for  
preparing effective emergency response plans, supporting First Responders, and  
improving border security can be achieved through the corps movement. Through the  
corps program, undocumented immigrants may earn the legal rights to citizenship by  
participating in emergency and disaster relief work.

For decades, illegal immigration problems have remained unresolved in the  
United States. Smyers declares that “Congress has failed to pass immigration reform,  
and it now seems as though Congress wants to sidestep the issue of immigration  
altogether.” In order to rebuild the nation’s broken immigration laws and to provide

\[ \text{\footnotesize 20 The White House, “Economy,” www.WhiteHouse.gov,} \]
\[ \text{\footnotesize http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/economy/ (accessed April 18, 2009).} \]

\[ \text{\footnotesize http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/energy_and_environment/ (accessed March 2, 2009).} \]

\[ \text{\footnotesize 22 The White House, “Economy.”} \]

\[ \text{\footnotesize http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/homeland_security/ (accessed April 18, 2009).} \]

\[ \text{\footnotesize 24 Jenifer Smyers, “Is Immigration an American Strength? Voices of Representatives of} \]
\[ \text{\footnotesize Immigrant Societies, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations,” October 10, 2008.} \]
hope during this difficult time of economic crisis, the 111\textsuperscript{th} Congress led by Democrats and the current Obama administration must try again to revive the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act and pass new legislation that creates a corps based federal work program to legalize undocumented immigrants. In doing so, the government does not need to “reinvent the wheel” in solving matters of illegal immigration. Instead, swift and deliberate action can be taken to conquer the immigration, economic, environmental, and national security challenges facing America.
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