

**Policy Position Paper**

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**SWK 355/555: Social Welfare Policy & Services**

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February 13, 2023

### **Abstract**

The debate over whether undocumented immigrants should have civil rights in the United States is a complex and controversial issue. On one hand, supporters argue that granting civil rights to undocumented immigrants is a matter of basic human dignity and fairness, and would also have positive economic impacts by allowing them to fully participate in society. On the other hand, opponents argue that undocumented immigrants are in the country illegally and therefore should not be granted the same rights as citizens. The issue is further complicated by concerns about national security, the impact on public resources, and the impact on the job prospects of citizens and legal residents. Ultimately, the question of whether undocumented immigrants should have civil rights in the United States is a complex one that requires a nuanced and evidence-based approach, taking into account the legal, economic, and social implications of various policy options.

Undocumented immigration has been a controversial issue in the United States for decades. Undocumented immigrants are foreign-born individuals who do not have legal permission to reside or work in the United States. The estimated number of undocumented immigrants in the United States is around 11 million people, and they make up approximately 3.5% of the total population (Camortoa, 2022). One of the central debates surrounding undocumented immigrants is whether they should have the same civil and employment rights as everyone else in the United States. Proponents argue that all people, regardless of their immigration status, should be protected under the law and have the right to work and live without fear of discrimination. On the other hand, opponents argue that granting rights to undocumented immigrants would encourage more illegal immigration, undermine the rule of law, and take away opportunities from American citizens. This paper will examine both sides of the argument and ultimately conclude that undocumented immigrants should have the same civil and employment rights as everyone else in the United States.

Opponents of granting civil and employment rights to undocumented immigrants argue that it would encourage more illegal immigration and undermine the rule of law. It is argued that if undocumented immigrants are granted rights, it would send a message that illegal immigration is acceptable and would increase the number of people entering the country illegally. According to the Pew Research Center, the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States has fluctuated over the past decade, with a peak of 12.2 million in 2007 and a low of 10.7 million in 2017. As of 2020, the estimated number of undocumented immigrants in the United States was 11 million. Giving rights to undocumented immigrants show that they have a free pass within the system, which may encourage more individuals to follow the same process. In turn, this will create and encourage more illegal immigration, which isn't held down to a particular law or

policy. Undermining immigration law can result in anyone and everyone taking advantage of the system, which can give more leeway to allowing for criminal activity to emerge and turn a blind eye to these individuals. Without holding a particular standard to the immigration law in place, we are creating an open door for individuals of all different backgrounds to have access to this country and what it offers, which in turn can be detrimental for current U.S. citizens.

Furthermore, granting rights to undocumented immigrants would take away opportunities from American citizens. These rights for undocumented immigrants would increase competition for jobs and lower wages for American citizens. The increase in undocumented immigrants allows for lower wages, taking away opportunities for American citizens within certain job sectors. Additionally, opponents argue that granting rights to undocumented immigrants would strain public resources. They argue that undocumented immigrants would have access to government benefits and services, such as healthcare and education, which would put a strain on public resources and create a burden on taxpayers. A lot of the opposition toward undocumented immigrants is the result of an increase in “economic downturns” (Valentino, 2013) it is believed that an increase in immigration can lead to an increase in market competition and affects national, state, and local social welfare agencies. As the increase of immigrants taking advantage of the social welfare systems also puts tension on our taxpayers, as the increase will result in an ever increase in taxes for those who are citizens. All in all, undocumented immigrants will slowly skyrocket our economy, which they are not liable to, but those who have considered citizens are the ones being hurt, as they are losing jobs and paying higher taxes that they are not contributing to.

Immigrants Proponents of granting civil and employment rights to undocumented immigrants argue that it is a matter of fairness and justice. All people, regardless of their

immigration status, should be protected under the law and have the right to work and live without fear of discrimination. This includes the right to a fair wage, safe working conditions, and protection against employment discrimination. Most of the time immigrants come to this country for a better opportunity for themselves and their families. The United States is known as a country of freedom and is built on the foundation of being a safe place for those who choose to call this country home. “The United States has strict immigration policies” (Liebert, 2010) which has made it difficult for some individuals that are aiming to make this country their home, therefore as a result we find more and more individuals choosing illegal methods to be living in this country. Additionally, granting rights to undocumented immigrants would benefit the U.S. economy as a whole. Undocumented immigrants make significant contributions to the U.S. economy, paying billions of dollars in taxes each year and filling many low-wage jobs that are important to the functioning of the economy. According to the Pew Research Center, studies show that “about 750,000 unauthorized immigrants held jobs in industries that produce and distribute food” (Krogstad, 2020) these job sectors often seemed to be “unwanted” by many U.S. citizens, but are necessary to be filled to regulate the overall economy.

By granting them rights, they would be more likely to come out of the shadows and participate fully in the economy, which would increase tax revenue and boost economic growth. Providing a smoother pathway for undocumented immigrants to citizenship will help create more opportunities that they have access to legally. These rights can provide for them to get legal work, increasing jobs in the workforce that pipelines to overall economic growth. These individuals who are then allowed to work and live in the US would be able to fully participate in the economy, and improve their integration into society, leading to an increase in productivity, innovation, and economic growth.

Another area that we see with undocumented immigrants is their fear of being deported. Often times in the event of any sort of legal situation, these individuals tend to avoid any interference to avoid any personal repercussions. Moreover, granting rights to undocumented immigrants would also improve public safety. Undocumented immigrants who live in fear of being deported are less likely to report crimes or cooperate with law enforcement. By granting them rights, they would be more likely to report crimes and work with law enforcement to keep their communities safe. Overall the efforts in gaining rights for individuals that are undocumented can lead to an overall betterment of society.

In conclusion, the debate over whether undocumented immigrants should have the same civil and employment rights as everyone else in the United States is complex and controversial. While opponents argue that granting rights to undocumented immigrants would encourage more illegal immigration and take away opportunities from American citizens, proponents argue that it is a matter of fairness and justice and that granting rights to undocumented immigrants would benefit the U.S. economy as a whole. Ultimately, this paper argues that undocumented immigrants should have the same civil and employment rights as everyone else in the United States. All people, regardless of their immigration status, should be protected under the law and have the right to work and live without fear of discrimination.

## Resources

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