

## 2008-2009 Immigration Update 3

November 30, 2008

### Economy Sends Many Migrants Home

The downturn in the U.S. economy is sending many migrants back to their home countries. This holiday season, 1 million Mexican migrants living in the United States are likely to return to Mexico—and many are expected to stay.

Evidence that the nation's economic woes have hurt migrants can be seen in a downturn in remittances—the money sent to relatives at home from migrants working in the United States. For the first time in the 12 years that these payments have been tracked, the total is expected to decrease in 2008. Rising from \$9.8 billion in 2002 to \$24 billion in 2007, the projected total for 2008 is \$23 billion. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, family income in immigrant families is down 7.3 percent.

Data gathered by *Denver Post* reporters for a November 23 report suggest that an exodus may be occurring: sales of bus tickets to Mexico are up, as are cash purchases of pickup trucks useful for hauling belongings back to Mexico and applications made at the Mexican consulate for permits that allow U.S.-purchased items to be imported to Mexico duty-free.

The number of immigrants from Mexico coming into the United States has also declined. The Mexican government estimates the rate has slowed by 42 percent since 2006. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that, for the first time in over a decade, more immigrants are arriving in the United States with authorization than without.

While the economy seems to be the most important cause of these changes, stepped up enforcement at the border and stricter laws in many states may also be having an impact.

For more data, interviews, and analysis, see the reports in the *Post*:  
[http://www.denverpost.com/ci\\_11047298?IADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com](http://www.denverpost.com/ci_11047298?IADID=Search-www.denverpost.com-www.denverpost.com).

### 1,304 Refugees Come to Colorado in FY 2007

Refugees and asylees are a special category of immigrant—those who are given permission to enter the country because of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” in their home countries. Refugees are granted their status while they are physically outside the United States, while asylees are given their status after arriving in the United States.

In the last fiscal year for which information is available, the United States admitted approximately 80,000 refugees and asylees. Only 1,304 found their way to Colorado. The largest number—748 of these immigrants were from Africa, with Somalia being the largest single supplier of refugees/asylees to Colorado. The second region providing a large number of the refugees was East Asia; 371 came to Colorado from East Asia, most from Myanmar. Perhaps surprisingly, relatively few refugees/asylees came to our state from Europe and Central Asia (111), the Middle East (49), and the Americas (13).

An excellent article on refugees in Colorado appeared in the November 29 *Rocky Mountain News*: <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/nov/29/escaping-the-past-believing-in-the-future/>.

## **Census Bureau Sees Increase in Homes Where Foreign Languages Are Spoken**

According to the Census Bureau, in 2007, nearly one-fifth of people over the age of 5 spoke a foreign language at home. Those data showed a big increase from 1990, when 13.8 percent of people spoke a language other than English at home. In some areas, the figures are even higher. California has the highest percentage of foreign-language speakers of any state, at 42.5 percent. Spanish is the most commonly spoken language other than English, with 34.5 million people older than 5 speaking the language at home; Chinese and other Asian languages are spoken at home by 8.3 million people in the United States.

The Census Bureau study also shows that the number of linguistically isolated households—those in which no one over 14 years of age speaks English well—is growing. In 2007, there were more than 5.5 million households in the United States; about one-quarter of Spanish-speaking households fell into this category. People living in linguistically isolated households not only have trouble finding jobs, but also accessing emergency help.

Two explanations are given for why the numbers cited here are growing. One is simply the growth of the Latino population, which doubled between 1990 and 2007. The second is the lack of English as a Second Language classes, which in the past were commonly offered in night schools and community centers. Today, fewer such classes are available. In some locations, people wishing to learn English spend up to a year on a waiting list before they can enroll in a class.

## **Policy Working Group to Advise President-Elect on Immigration**

Immigration is one of seven policy areas on which a Policy Working Group will be advising the Obama administration. The goal of the working groups, according to the transition website <http://change.gov>, is to “develop the priority policy proposals and plans from the Obama Campaign for action during the Obama-Biden Administration.” Other focuses of working groups are the economy, education, energy and the environment, health care, national security, and technology, innovation and government reform.

The co-chairs of the working group are T. Alexander Aleinikoff, Dean of the Georgetown University Law Center and Executive Vice President of Georgetown University, and Mariano-Florentino (Tino) Cuéllar, Professor and Deane F. Johnson Faculty Scholar at Stanford Law School. Among the other members of the working group are Preeta Bansal, an attorney in private practice and former Solicitor General of New York; Dennis Burke, chief of staff for Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano; Maria Echaveste, senior fellow at American Progress and former official in the Clinton administration; Tara Magner, the National Immigrant Justice Center's Director of Policy; Esther Olavarria, senior fellow at American Progress and a former official with the UN High Command and a staff attorney for Senator Edward Kennedy.

## **Australian Government Rejects Residency for Family of Boy with Down Syndrome**

German-born Dr. Bernhard Moeller is the only doctor in the area of Australia in which he practices. While his patients want Moeller and his family to be granted permanent residency in Australia, the nation's immigration minister turned down the Moeller family's application because their 13-year-old son Lukas has Down Syndrome. In making the decision, the federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship said that Lukas's medical condition would be "likely to result in a significant and ongoing cost to the Australian community."

The Moeller family, residents in the community of Horsham, officials in the state of Victoria, and even some federal government officials have vowed to fight the decision. Moeller argued that the government had failed to recognize that "we are absolutely able to support him and I don't want him to rely on any government pension anyway. He's well looked after. And actually he can contribute to the community here."