



Beside the Golden Door: U.S. Immigration Reform in a New Era of Globalization

Pia Orrenius, Madeline Zavodny

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"I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"?the last line of Emma Lazarus's famous poem invites immigrants to enter a land of economic opportunity. Many have accepted that invitation; today, foreign-born workers make up nearly 16 percent of the U.S. workforce and account for almost half of workforce growth over the last decade. Rather than capitalizing on these gains, however, recent immigration reforms have resulted in an inefficient, patchwork system that shortchanges high-skilled immigrants and poorly serves the American public.

Beside the Golden Door: U.S. Immigration Reform in a New Era of Globalization proposes a radical overhaul of current immigration policy designed to strengthen economic competitiveness and long-run growth. Pia M. Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny outline a plan that favors employment-based immigration over family reunification, making work-based visas the rule, not the exception. They argue that immigration policy should favor high-skilled workers while retaining avenues for low-skilled immigration; family reunification should be limited to spouses and minor children; provisional visas should be the norm; and quotas that lead to queuing must be eliminated.

A selective immigration policy focused on high-skilled, high-demand workers will allow the United States to compete in an increasingly global economy while protecting the interests of American citizens and benefiting taxpayers. Orrenius and Zavodny conclude that "while not all potential immigrants who knock at the golden door should be admitted, the door should swing wide open to welcome those who desire nothing more than the opportunity to work for the American dream."

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