



## Putting Americans Back to Work?

President-elect Obama has said that the “number one goal” of his economic recovery plan is to create three million new jobs in the United States over the next two years. On January 10, his economic advisors released a report estimating that the Obama plan will create 2.1 million new jobs and prevent 1.6 million currently employed U.S. workers from losing their jobs over the next two years.<sup>1</sup> The price tag for the Obama plan is expected to be between \$775 billion (\$210,000 per job created or saved) and \$1.2 trillion (\$325,000 per job created or saved).

Assuming that the Obama plan is successful, it will have *no impact whatsoever* on joblessness in America if our current immigration policy remains in force. In fact, Mr. Obama’s economic advisors admit that even if the Obama plan is enacted, the U.S. unemployment rate is unlikely to decrease in the next two years (they project a peak unemployment rate of almost 8.0 percent in 2009). One obvious reason is the continued importation of foreign workers. Unless Congress enacts legislation to reduce immigration, the Obama Administration will authorize more than 3.3 million new, working-age foreigners to take U.S. jobs over the next two years—enough foreign workers to fill every new job created under the Obama plan, plus 1.3 million existing U.S. jobs. And these are just the workers who will be imported legally.

*Under current U.S. immigration policy, the Obama Administration will authorize an average of 138,000 new foreigners each month to fill American jobs, regardless of whether the U.S. economy is producing or losing jobs, or whether U.S. wages are rising or falling.*

- **In 2007, the Bush Administration approved 744,531 foreigners aged 20 to 64<sup>2</sup> to come to the United States as lawful permanent residents (LPRs), each of whom is automatically authorized to work here.**
- **Also in 2007, the Bush Administration issued 854,186 new employment authorization documents (EADs) to foreigners admitted to the United States for a temporary period (often several years).** This figure does not include the EADs issued as replacements or as renewals or extensions for foreigners already here.

<sup>1</sup> While the report concludes that 3.7 million jobs will be created or saved by the end of FY 2010, the authors also state in the report that they expect “the jobs created by spending on infrastructure, education, health, and energy to be concentrated in 2010 and 2011.” This seems to indicate that, while the money for the plan will be spent in two years, the jobs will be created over three years.

<sup>2</sup> The Office of Immigration Statistics within the Department of Homeland Security publishes annually a Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (<http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/>), which includes a breakdown of LPRs by age group. The statistics used in this paper exclude the 15-19 years-of-age group since 16 is the legal working age in the United States.

- The administration has not yet announced how many new LPRs were approved in 2008, but we can assume that at least the prior year’s level of 745,000 working-age LPRs were authorized last year. (This may be a conservative estimate in light of the steady growth of the legal immigration flow in recent years.) **The administration says it issued 912,735 new EADs in 2008**, in addition to the new working-age LPRs.
- This means the Bush Administration likely authorized a grand total of 1,657,735 foreigners to work in the United States in 2008 alone. **That is 138,000 new, legal foreign workers every month.**
- In addition to these new, legal foreign workers, some **7.7 million illegal aliens were employed in U.S. jobs in 2008**, based on estimates from the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>3</sup> These are all jobs that unemployed U.S. workers—both citizens and already-resident legal immigrants—could and should have the chance to fill.

<b>Jobs Gained/Lost over the Next Two Years<sup>4</sup></b>	
<b>Obama Plan</b>	<b>+2,100,000 U.S. jobs</b>
<b>Working-Age Foreigners Admitted Legally and Authorized to Work Under Current Law</b>	<b>-3,300,000<sup>5</sup> U.S. jobs</b>
<b>Illegal Aliens Currently Working in U.S. Jobs</b>	<b>-7,700,000 U.S. jobs</b>

In light of these data, the most cost-effective and fastest way for the Obama Administration to open up jobs for Americans is to:

- 1) **Reduce the number of legal foreign workers being imported every month, including eliminating the chain migration categories for non-nuclear family and the visa lottery, as recommended by the bipartisan Barbara Jordan Commission on Immigration Reform; and**
- 2) **Make the highly successful E-Verify program mandatory for all U.S. employers to begin opening up the 7.7 million jobs held by illegal aliens.**

<sup>3</sup> The Pew Hispanic Center reported in October 2008 that the illegal population stood at 11.9 million (<http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=94>). An earlier Pew study found that 65 percent of the illegal population is employed in the United States (<http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=61>). The estimate that 7.7 million illegal aliens held U.S. jobs in 2008 assumes the same employment rate.

<sup>4</sup> This chart assumes the original two-year period in order to provide a clear comparison with immigration data, despite the fact that the new report on the Obama plan indicates that job creation may take three years. The longer the Obama job-creation program takes to actually produce new jobs, the larger the population of new foreign workers to compete with Americans for those jobs.

<sup>5</sup> 130,000 multiplied by 24 months equals 3.3 million.