

New economic data on immigrants

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Seeking to insert “fact into a fact-free debate” about immigration, the Immigration Policy Center yesterday unveiled statistical data for all 50 states highlighting Latino and Asian immigrants’ political and economic power in American life.

“Facts are sadly lacking in the immigration debate,” Mary Giovagnoli, director of the center, a pro-immigrant research and policy arm of the American Immigration Council, said in a conference call with reporters.

The policy center, based in Washington, D.C., compiled “fact sheets” for all 50 states and the District of Columbia from academic studies and government databases. They can be found at www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts.

According to its data, “immigrants are responsible for \$229 billion in economic output . . . or 22.4 percent of the total New York State [Gross Domestic Product],” citing a 2007 study by

the Fiscal Policy Institute. And, as of 2008, 51.9 percent of immigrants in New York, or 2.2 million people, were naturalized citizens, according to census data, and as a result, eligible to vote.

Nationally, the center said, Latinos and Asians — the two largest immigrant groups in the United States — account for \$1.5 trillion in consumer purchasing power in 2008, and businesses they owned employed about 3.7 million people. “Armed with this information, Americans can make decisions on [immigration] policy,” Giovagnoli said. “Rather than fearing immigrants, we need to understand the role they play.”

The center’s work was applauded by Long Island advocates. Darren Sandow, executive director of the Port Washington-based Hagedorn Foundation, said the Immigrant Policy Center puts “truth into the game . . . because they work from facts and not an ideological center.”

The foundation, which sup-

ports social equity, has funded studies by an Adelphi University researcher on immigrants’ contributions to Long Island’s economy, finding immigrants in 2006 contributed an estimated \$2.13 billion in taxes and other government revenue, directly and indirectly, while Nassau and Suffolk local governments spent about \$1.06 billion for their health, K-12 education and corrections. That amounts to a net contribution of \$1.07 billion.

Steven Camarota, director of research for the Center for Immigration Studies, said “There is no question immigrants pay taxes.

“There’s no question the economy is maybe even larger than it otherwise would have been because of the presence of immigrants. And neither fact tells us whether the native-born population is benefiting because you have to know not just what the immigrants pay in taxes, but what they use in services.”



New York State immigrant facts

- The foreign-born share of New York State's population rose from 15.9 percent in 1990 to 21.7 percent in 2008.
 - 51.9 percent of immigrants in New York State were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2008.
 - The Latino share of New York State's population grew from 12.3 percent in 1990 to 16.7 percent in 2008.
 - The Asian share of New York State's population grew from 3.8 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 2008.
 - Immigrants comprised 26.9 percent of the state's workforce in 2008.
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