

Date of Hearing: March 10, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Ash Kalra, Chair
SJR 8 (Arreguín) – As Introduced June 16, 2025

SENATE VOTE: 29-0

SUBJECT: THE RENEWING IMMIGRATION PROVISIONS OF THE IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1929

KEY ISSUE: SHOULD THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE SUPPORT THE REGISTRY BILLS THAT PROPOSE TO MODIFY SECTION 249 OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT TO ALLOW UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS WHO MEET SPECIFIED CRITERIA TO APPLY FOR LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENCY?

SYNOPSIS

In 1986 Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which implemented sweeping reform policies, including prohibitions on employers hiring or recruiting immigrants without work authorization. IRCA is perhaps most well-known for its amnesty program that allowed nearly 3 million undocumented immigrants to obtain legal status. Unfortunately, since 1986, Congress has repeatedly failed to pass any significant immigration reform. California is home to nearly a quarter of the country's immigrant population, totaling approximately 10.6 million people across the state. As of the most recent data, 83% of California's immigrant population were naturalized citizens, or had some form of legal residency status. Approximately the remaining 17% are undocumented. A lack of lawful immigration status makes obtaining work authorization challenging if not impossible and puts numerous government benefits out of reach, relegating much of the undocumented population to the shadows of society.

In 2023, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren introduced House Resolution No. 1511 and Senator Padilla introduced Senate Bill 2606 both titled Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929. Both bills amend IRCA's amnesty provision to allow undocumented immigrants who entered the United States at least seven years ago to apply for legal permanent residence. While the measure does not have any real likelihood of success in this Republican-controlled Congress, it nonetheless has served as a rallying point for immigrants' rights advocates calling for comprehensive immigration reform. This resolution expresses this Legislature's support of those measures and calls for a fix to the country's immigration system. This resolution is sponsored by the Coalition for Human Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA) and enjoys support from the California League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California and one individual.

SUMMARY: Supports House Resolution No. 1511 and Senate Bill 2606 that propose to modify Section 249 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow undocumented immigrants who meet specified criteria and who entered the United States at least seven years before their application to apply for legal permanent residency. Specifically, **this resolution:**

1) Makes the following findings:

- a) The United States of America is a nation founded on the principles that all people are created equal and the promise of freedom for all;
 - b) Our strength as a country has always been greater when we welcome newcomers;
 - c) California has the highest number of migrants in the country;
 - d) It has been nearly 40 years since the federal government passed an immigration reform bill, and our current immigration system is unable to meet the needs of the present day;
 - e) California is home to nearly 10,000,000 immigrants, the majority of whom have lived in the United States for more than 10 years;
 - f) Undocumented immigrants contribute significantly to California's economy;
 - g) One in 10 workers in California is an undocumented immigrant, and undocumented immigrants contribute \$51.4 billion dollars in state and local taxes;
 - h) In 2023, California congressional leaders introduced the Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929 (Registry bills) that allows undocumented people living continuously in the United States for at least seven years to apply for legal permanent residency, and it is estimated that approximately 8,000,000 undocumented people may benefit from the passage of that bill;
 - i) Eighty percent of Californians believe there should be a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants;
 - j) Immigrant communities continue to organize around passing immigration reform, and this month, the Northern California Coalition for Just Immigration Reform completed a three-day walk from the City of Vacaville to the City of Sacramento in support of the Registry bills; and
 - k) Passing immigration reform that recognizes the contributions and humanity of immigrants is in line with our values as a state and as a country.
- 2) Resolves, on behalf of the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, that a workable, humane, and just approach to solving our nation's broken immigration system would benefit California and the United States as a whole, and therefore, the Registry bills should be supported.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Provides that the federal government has the exclusive authority to regulate immigration and naturalization. (U.S. Const., article I, section 8, clauses 3 and 4.)
- 2) Provides that all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. (U.S. Constitution, Fourteenth Amendment.)
- 3) Prohibits the state from making or enforcing any law which abridges the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States, and prohibits the state from depriving any person

of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, or denying to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (U.S. Constitution, Fourteenth Amendment.)

- 4) Makes every person born in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, a national and citizen of the United States at birth. (8 U.S.C. Section 1401 (a).)
- 5) Grants the Attorney General of the United States the discretion to grant lawful admission for permanent residence to undocumented immigrants who meet the following requirements:
 - a) They are not inadmissible under Section 212 (a)(3)(E) or Section 212 (a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act insofar as it relates to criminals, procurers and other immoral persons, subversives, violators of the narcotic laws or smugglers of aliens;
 - b) Entered the United States before January 1, 1972;
 - c) Has established continuous residence in the United States since entry;
 - d) Is of good moral character;
 - e) Is not ineligible for citizenship and is not deportable under Section 237 (a)(4)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

FISCAL EFFECT: As currently in print this measure is keyed non-fiscal.

COMMENTS: Immigrants to the United States can have a range of immigration statuses. Individuals who enter the United States with prior authorization often come with either an immigrant visa (issued to individuals with intent to stay in the United States usually through an application filed by a family member or sponsored by an employer), or a non-immigrant visa (issued to individuals for temporary visits, such as a tourist, work, or student visa). Someone who enters with a valid visa, but stays beyond the date authorized, loses their lawful immigration status, and is considered undocumented. Someone who crosses the border into the United States without prior authorization is also considered undocumented. Some immigrants, whether undocumented or otherwise, may also obtain legal permanent residency, often referred to as a green card or LPR. However, undocumented immigrants face steep barriers to qualifying for residency. After that point, an individual may opt to apply for citizenship, a process referred to as naturalization.

California is home to nearly a quarter of the country's immigrant population, totaling approximately 10.6 million people across the state. This population consists of individuals from dozens of countries, with the most common countries of origin being Mexico, the Philippines, and China. As of the most recent data, 83% of California's immigrant population were naturalized citizens, or had some form of legal residency status. Approximately the remaining 17% are undocumented. (Public Policy Institute of California, *Immigrants in California* available at: <https://www.ppic.org/publication/immigrants-in-california/>.)

A brief history of immigration laws in the United States. Until 1952, the country's immigration policies consisted of a patchwork of statutes. In the late 19th century, Congress passed a number of restrictive immigration laws, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In 1921 and 1924, Congress passed laws implementing a numerical quota-system in an attempt to limit the flow of immigrants from "less desirable" countries. In 1952, Congress passed the Immigration and

Nationality Act of 1952 which largely consolidated the country's immigration laws and removed race as a basis for exclusion from the country. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) serves as the current statutory framework for U.S. immigration laws. In 1986, Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which implemented sweeping reform policies, including prohibitions on employers hiring or recruiting immigrants without work authorization. IRCA also included an amnesty program that granted the Attorney General the discretion to grant legal permanent residence to undocumented individuals who entered the United States before July 1, 1972 and immigrants who were employed in the agricultural sector for at least 90 days before May, 1986. In order to qualify, applicants must have also maintained continuous residence in the United States since their date of entry, be of good moral character, and were not otherwise ineligible for citizenship or deportable. According to a 2001 report from the Department of Homeland Security, nearly 3 million people applied for amnesty under the 1986 provisions, and nearly 2.7 million were ultimately granted legal permanent residency. (Nancy Rytina, Department of Homeland Security Office of Policy and Planning, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *IRCA Legalization Effects: Lawful Permanent Residence and Naturalization through 2001* (October 25, 2002) available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/irca0114int.pdf>.) The country's undocumented population has fluctuated ever since. In 2007, the nationwide undocumented population reached an estimated 12.2 million. Since then, the number has declined with most recent estimates setting the total at 11 million in 2022. (Passel and Krogstad (Pew Research Center) *What we know about unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S.* (July 22, 2025) available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/07/22/what-we-know-about-unauthorized-immigrants-living-in-the-us/>.)

The potential negative impact of living in the United States without lawful status cannot be overstated. Documented immigrants are able to obtain work authorization which in turn opens the door to financial stability. Citizens, natural-born or naturalized, can likewise pursue their career of choice. However, undocumented immigrants are not entitled to work authorization and are relegated to lower-wage, physically demanding jobs at much higher rates than documented immigrants and citizens. Moreover, undocumented status bars access to many social safety net services that low-income earners can typically access to offset the effects of poverty. This is true despite the impressive tax contributions undocumented communities provide. According to one report, undocumented immigrants paid \$96.7 billion in federal, state, and local taxes in 2022, with \$59.4 billion of that going to the federal government. For every 1 million undocumented immigrants in the country, public services received \$8.9 billion in tax revenue. More than a third of those dollars are spent on programs that undocumented tax payers are prevented from accessing, including \$25.7 billion in Social Security taxes, and \$1.8 billion in unemployment insurance. In California, undocumented immigrants paid \$8.5 billion in taxes. (Davis, Guzman, and Sifre (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy) *Tax Payments by Undocumented Immigrants*, July 30 2024 available at: <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-taxes-2024/>.)

The Trump administration has made no secret of its intent to engage in a mass deportation campaign. While the recent events in Minnesota have focused national attention on the topic, closer to home, on June 6, 2025, protests grew in Los Angeles in response to widespread immigration enforcement activity throughout the area. In response to the protests, President Trump deployed National Guard troops and Marines to L.A. over the objection of state officials, including Governor Newsom. (Hutchinson (ABC News) June 11, 2025 *LA protests timeline: How ICE raids sparked demonstrations and Trump to send in the military* available at: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/timeline-ice-raids-sparked-la-protests-prompted->

trump/story?id=122688437.) Immigration raids have continued throughout L.A. in the months since the protests, prompting residents to stay home out of fear of being detained. (Vives, Rainey, and Jany (Los Angeles Times) June 15, 2025 *L.A. neighborhoods clear out as immigration raids send people underground* available at: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-06-15/some-l-a-neighborhoods-clear-out-as-immigration-raids-push-people-underground>.) Moreover, the fear triggered by the presidential administration's new aggressive deportation policies has forced many immigrants further into the shadows, keeping their children home from school and opting to stay home from work.

Attempts to revoke birthright citizenship. On January 20, 2025, the President issued Executive Order Number 14160 titled "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship." It ordered, despite long-standing precedent to the contrary, that a child born in the United States whose mother was either undocumented or was in the U.S. with temporary lawful status (such as a tourist visa) and whose father was a noncitizen without lawful permanent residency would not be a citizen at birth. In effect the order limits citizenship conferred at birth to children with at least one parent who is either a citizen or a lawful permanent resident. In issuing this directive, the order relies on the argument that the Fourteenth Amendment has "always excluded from birthright citizenship persons who were born in the United States but not 'subject to the jurisdiction thereof.'" The order does not explicitly argue how children born in the U.S. born to noncitizen parents are *not* subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

The order triggered a flurry of litigation challenging the order. United States District Courts for the District of Maryland, the Western District of Washington, and the District of Massachusetts granted preliminary injunctions blocking the order. The administration appealed those injunctions, and were denied by the Fourth, Ninth, and First Circuit Courts. Finally, the Administration petitioned the Supreme Court to partially stay the injunction to apply only to the petitioners in the cases arising out of Maryland, Washington, and Massachusetts. After initially declining to hear the Administration's appeal of the lower courts' injunction, the Court accepted the Administration's petition. On June 27 of last year, in one of many controversial rulings for the session, the Court granted the administration's request to partially pause the lower court's injunctions. Importantly, the decision did *not* rule on the issue of birthright citizenship itself. Instead, it focused on the issue of universal injunctions and whether the lower federal courts exceeded their authority by blocking the Executive Order nationwide. The decision did not decide whether the lower courts' injunctions would apply to the states challenging the order, instead directing them to "determine whether a narrower injunction is appropriate." (*Donald J. Trump v. CASA, Inc.* (2025) 606 U.S. ____.) The decision ultimately leaves open the potential for a patchwork quilt of citizenship laws and statuses across the country, depending on whether a court has enjoined the Order as applied to the parties for it in a given suit. Should the Order go into effect to any extent, the undocumented population could rise exponentially. On April 1, 2026, the Supreme Court will once again hear oral argument in a case challenging the Order.

H.R. 1511 and S. 2606: Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929. Since 1986, Congress has struggled to pass any comprehensive immigration reform. Most recently, a bipartisan measure which included significant increases to funding for immigration enforcement as well as creating new pathways for legal immigration died in the Senate following a sharp rebuke from then-candidate Trump. (Kelly Garrity (Politico) February 5, 2024 available at: <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/02/05/border-bill-trump-00139584>.) On March 9, 2023 Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA-18) introduced H.R. 1511: Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929. On July 27, 2023, Senator Padilla (D-CA) introduced

S.2606 titled the same. The bills together are known as the “Registry Bills” and seek to revive the key provision of IRCA (still titled the Immigration Act of 1929 due to its original enactment date which was subsequently amended by IRCA). Both measures would remove the existing language which has effectively sunset. The statute as amended would allow those who are “long-term residents of the United States” and entered at least 7 years before their application date to apply for legal permanent residence as long as they met the same conditions as the Reagan amnesty program. It is estimated that 8 million people would be eligible for the program.

In recognition of both bills’ potential to bring millions of people out of the shadows *this resolution voices this Legislature’s support for the “Registry bills” and immigration reform generally.* According to the author:

The immigration system in the United States is broken. There are millions of immigrants living, working and contributing to our communities and economy who are living with fear and uncertainty. Joint Resolution 17 supports federal bills SB 2606 and HR 1511, urging Congress to modernize the Immigration Act of 1929, “the Registry Act”. The federal registry provision of the Act offered a pathway to permanent residency for people who resided in the US continuously for several years. However, the eligibility date requiring entry before 1972 has not been updated since 1986, and now the law is virtually obsolete. It also fails to recognize the reality of millions of long-term residents who have built lives, families, and careers in this country, including the 2 million Dreamers who were brought to this country as minors.

In California, where roughly 2.8 million undocumented immigrants live, updating the registry would provide much-needed stability for communities, strengthen the economy, and support a more compassionate and modern immigration system for the individuals who collectively contribute \$51.4 billion in state and local taxes. Legal residency would allow thousands of Californians to contribute more fully, secure better jobs, and invest in their families’ futures.

This resolution is a commonsense step that reflects our values and the urgent need for federal action. California must reaffirm its support for Congress to modernize the immigration registry and ensure that dignity and opportunity are extended to those who have proven their deep ties to our nation.

Since their introduction, neither Congressional measure has been brought up for a vote. Nonetheless, legislators and advocates have taken the opportunity to call for immigration reform. Immigrants’ rights advocacy groups such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrants Rights Los Angeles (CHIRLA) organized a campaign to “move Congress to update an immigration provision already in the books known as the registry, and we say yes to a path to citizenship, and yes to a life with dignity, liberty, and justice for millions of Americans in waiting.” (*All in for Registry Digital Toolkit* (CHIRLA) available at: https://www.chirla.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Registry_AllInAugustToolkit.pdf.) In August of 2023, advocates walked more than 40 miles from the North and South Bay Area to San Francisco. (40-mile walk for immigration reform and migrant rights to focus on residency status in Bay Area-wide event - CBS San Francisco.) Last year, the Northern California Coalition for Just Immigration Reform (NCCJIR) continued efforts to advocate for the bills, organizing the Three-Day Walk for Immigrant Rights from Vacaville to Sacramento (Jack Rodriguez-Vars (The Sacramento Bee) *‘Come join us.’ Immigrant-rights advocates complete 3-day march to Sacramento*, June 11,

2025 available at: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article308263435.html>.) Despite both bills' longshot odds, they stand as a call to action for legislators and advocates nationwide, a call which this resolution seeks to amplify.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: This resolution is sponsored by supported by the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA) and supported California League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California. In support of the measure CHIRLA submits:

This resolution recognizes the urgent need to provide a fair and permanent pathway to legalization for long-term undocumented immigrants who call the United States home. CHIRLA is a statewide, membership-based organization that seeks to advance the human, civil, and labor rights of immigrants and refugees. We advocate at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure dignity, inclusion, and justice for all immigrant communities.

The Registry Act of 1929 has been one of the few avenues for long-time undocumented residents to adjust their status. Over the last century, Congress has updated the registry date multiple times in 1940, 1958, 1965, and most recently in 1986, when the cutoff date was set at January 1, 1972. It has now been nearly four decades since the last update, rendering the program effectively obsolete. Federal legislation being introduced, the Renewing Immigration Provisions of the Immigration Act of 1929 (H.R. 1511 / S. 2606) would address this issue by creating a rolling registry, allowing undocumented individuals who have resided in the United States for at least seven years and meet certain conditions to apply for permanent residency.

California is home to more than 2.3 million undocumented immigrants, modernizing the registry could benefit hundreds of thousands of people who already contribute to our workforce, our communities, and our economy. Nationally, over 8 million immigrants could be eligible, unlocking \$121 billion in additional wages and generating more than \$83 billion in tax revenue over ten years.

We have worked with thousands of individuals who have lived in the U.S. for decades raising families, paying taxes, and contributing to society but who remain vulnerable to exploitation, detention, and deportation due to outdated immigration laws. Updating the registry would provide long-overdue relief and restore trust and stability to immigrant communities.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA) (sponsor)
California League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
SEIU California
1 individual

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Manuela Boucher-de la Cadena / JUD. / (916) 319-2334