

Background Information on LWVUS Immigration Study-Part I Material to Support Consensus Questions 1, 3 & 5

The following three articles, obtained from the LWVUS website, and authored by members of the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee, offer information on current federal immigration policy, criteria for immigrants and the economic impact of immigration. These articles, named below, should be used as background for consideration of LWVUS consensus questions 1, 3 and 5 (as stated on page 5).

- **Overview: Federal Immigration Policy and Proposed Reforms, by Deborah Macmillan**
- **Family Reunification and Diversity Policies (a “brief”)**
- **Immigration and the Economy, by Chris Carson**

Article 1 . . .

Overview: Federal Immigration Policy and Proposed Reforms

By Deborah Macmillan

Deborah Macmillan, LWV of East Windsor-Hightstown, NJ, is a member of the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee

Federal Immigration Policy

Federal immigration policy applies directly to anyone who has immigrated or who wishes to immigrate to the U.S. It does not apply to persons born in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories,¹ as these are native-born U.S. citizens.

Federal policy determines:

- Who may immigrate to the U.S.,
- How or if they may become citizens, and
- Many aspects of their lives once here.

Legal immigrants and categories under which they may enter the U.S.: Immigrants who enter the U.S. legally today are most likely to do so as a spouse or child of a citizen or permanent resident, or as another family member. The next largest group enters under an employment-based preference or as a refugee/asylee. Diversity immigrants, the last group of any size, come from a variety of countries under a “lottery” system without respect to the number entering from their countries via other visa groups.

In 1965, a major revision of immigration law set quotas for these various groups. These quotas indicate the primary foci for U.S. immigration policy:

Status under which visas were granted for permanent residence 2005 (USCIS)

<u>Status</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Immediate relatives of US citizens	39%
Employment-based preferences	22%
Other family-sponsored preferences	19%
Refugees/asylees	13%
Diversity programs	4%
Other	3%

- *Employer need and employment-based preferences, including high-level professionals and entrepreneurs who provide work for others*
- *Family reunification*
 - For citizens
 - For other permanent residents
 - Reunification with immediate relatives (spouses, children)
- *Human rights issues* related to needs for refuge, asylum or other protected status
- *Diversity* of country of origin

The quotas for these different groups are complicated. For example, the total quota for family-based immigration is 480,000, but immediate relatives of U.S. citizens are exempt, and actual totals generally exceed 600,000.

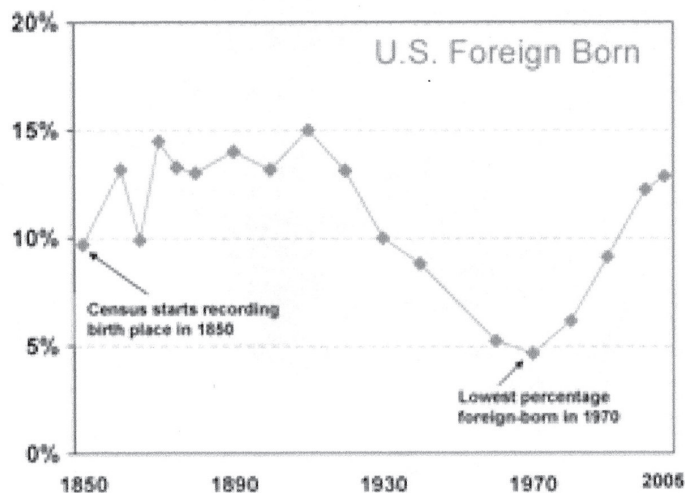
The 1965 legislation eliminated the 1924 country-based quotas heavily weighted to immigration from Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, and opened immigration to all countries. The 1965 diversity requirement set a maximum for each country of 7 percent of the total immigration in a given year (excluding refugees), but eventually led to de facto quotas. Originally, that quota was 20,000 immigrants

per country per year; since 1990 it has grown to slightly over 25,000 per year. As a result, legal immigration from Mexico, China, India and the Philippines, the countries that send us the most immigrants, is markedly lower than it would be if entry from a country were proportionate to those who wanted to come.

Temporary visitors: Federal policy also determines who may enter the U.S. on a temporary basis, for instance as a tourist, a student or a guest worker.

Temporary work quotas are also complicated. For example, in 2005 the quota for skilled professional workers was 65,000, but the actual number of these temporary workers was roughly 124,000. This number includes 20,000 workers with advanced degrees, not counted against the quota, who worked for the government, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions.

Temporary visitors should, as the name implies, have little relevance for permanent immigration, but 25 to 40 percent of unauthorized immigrants are individuals who have overstayed temporary visas. Adjustment from temporary to permanent status is frequent.



Employment visas and trade agreements: Employment is a major goal for both immigration and visitor policy, but trade agreements and immigration laws and policies can be spectacularly out of sync. For example, since 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) contributed to the substantial increase in trade between the U.S. and Mexico, while immigration from Mexico to the U.S. grew more restricted and more problematic.

Quotas as policy: Numeric quotas are indicative of the importance of family unification, employment (mostly

skilled) and diversity. These quotas also indicate a desire to limit immigration in order to minimize the disruption of large-scale or uncontrolled immigration. Much of the current focus on control stems in part from the very visible increase in immigration over the last several decades. This is true even though the percentage of immigrants today in terms of current population figures is no larger than it was in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Nationally our foreign-born percentage increased—

- From less than 5 percent in 1970, its lowest point since before 1850 when records were first kept
- To 9 percent in 1990
- To 12 percent in 2000
- To between 12 and 13 percent in 2005.

In 1990, our foreign-born were concentrated in a few states. Only five coastal states showed 12 percent or higher.

Today 14 states have populations with 12 percent or higher foreign-born, including Illinois and Arizona as well as several coastal states and the District of Columbia.

Many states with a relatively low percentage of foreign-born in 1990 remain below the 12 percent threshold today. Nonetheless, they have experienced a doubling or tripling of the percentage of foreign-born residents. This marked increase in communities and states other than traditional immigration centers has been a major factor in nationalizing the attention paid to immigration.

Covert border crossings: A large group of immigrants enter this country illegally – many by covertly crossing the U.S. border with Mexico. Originally this group was predominantly male and highly transient – with workers making frequent trips to and from Mexico. Illegal border crossing has become more publicized and difficult, return trips have decreased and migrating groups often include entire families. As a result, more children of unauthorized immigrants have been born in the U.S., and permanent residence has become a more likely prospect for their families.

Naturalization and rights of naturalized citizens: Immigrants who wish to become citizens may do so through the naturalization process. The process requires five years of residence (three for spouses of U.S. citizens or members of the military); the ability to read, write and speak simple words and phrases in English; and a basic knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of American history and principles of U.S. government. An immigrant seeking

naturalization must have maintained good moral character for the requisite five years.²

A naturalized citizen has all of the rights of a native-born citizen with the exception that a naturalized citizen cannot become president of the United States. However, naturalized citizens may serve in positions that could lead to the presidency. Henry Kissinger and Madeleine Albright did so as Secretaries of State, and currently Carlos Gutierrez and Elaine Chao are Secretaries of Commerce and Labor, respectively. Because of a ruling in a recent lawsuit, naturalized citizens may remain subject to deportation/removal in certain instances.³

Rights of other immigrants: Immigrants who have not gone through the naturalization process, as well as unauthorized immigrants and immigrants legalized in the 1986 amnesty program, have many of the same rights as native-born citizens, including constitutional rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

Only citizens, native-born and naturalized, may vote in federal elections. In the past, non-citizens have been able to vote in many state and local elections, but currently, few jurisdictions allow non-citizens to vote.

Like native-born and naturalized citizens, permanent (legal) immigrants may sponsor immediate relatives (spouses and children under 21) and other family members, but at a lower priority than citizens.

Since 1996 permanent residents other than refugees have faced increasing restrictions with respect to access to the courts and use of social services such as Temporary Aid For Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Social Security and other welfare services.

Rights of U.S. citizens by virtue of birth: Children born in this country are U.S. citizens, with all the rights of other U.S. citizens. This includes U.S.-born children of unauthorized immigrants.⁴ Legal challenges to their citizen status have been unsuccessful, but procedural challenges may have more impact. For example, because proof of citizenship is now required for a child to receive treatment under Medicaid, treatment could be denied to a new born infant until proof of citizenship is verified; this could take several weeks.

Changes and proposals since 2001: In 2002, the PATRIOT Act extended the criteria for foreign-born entrance (or for denial of entrance) to include security and terrorist concerns,

health grounds, criminal history, indigence and previous removal. People judged to be “anarchists and political extremists” have been excluded since the assassination of President McKinley by a Polish anarchist in 1901.

The 2005 Sensenbrenner bill proposed extending deportable offenses to include drunken driving, as well as provisions for building 700 miles of security fencing along the Mexican border.⁵ Only the fencing provision, largely unfunded, remained when the bill was passed by wide margins in the House and the Senate in 2006, and signed into law.

National language: The U.S. has never had an official language. The issue has been raised off and on since we first became a nation. Each time it has been rejected as impractical, generally because of the burden it would impose on major groups of citizens, residents and visitors. We do, however, require most immigrants to speak and understand simple English in order to become citizens.⁶ Several states, territories and communities have passed or attempted to pass legislation requiring English as the language of government or as one of two or three such languages. Most recently, Arizona passed a referendum in the November 2006 election to this effect, a second attempt following 1988 legislation which was overturned by both the state and the federal supreme courts. Similarly, Hazleton, PA, has revised its English-only law to try to ensure it will withstand court review. In addition, had the Senate’s McCain-Kennedy bill passed the House as well, and had it retained the Inhofe amendment, English would now be our national language.

Additional Changes and Proposed Reforms

It is likely that there will be some new legislation and regulations over the next few years, not just concerning the language and security issues noted above, but in other areas as well.

Pathway to citizenship: As in 1986, Congress will likely create some path to citizenship for the large number of unauthorized immigrants currently in the United States. This legislation will probably be coupled with policies and regulations intended to limit the number of unauthorized immigrants in the future. In 2005, the McCain-Kennedy bill proposed that unauthorized immigrants in the country for five years or more could remain if they so chose. But, they would have to continue working, paying taxes and any back taxes, and learning English. Only after paying at least

\$3,250 in fines and fees, could they become legal permanent residents.

Amnesty for children: Overall amnesty similar to that in the 1986 law seems unlikely. Amnesty for individuals educated in our schools whose parents brought them to this country when the children were too young to play any part in the decision to enter without documents or to overstay their visas is a more likely outcome.

Increased quotas: Increased quotas where the pressure is the highest could substantially cut the number of new unauthorized immigrants, especially if visa applications were processed promptly. Geographically this could benefit Mexico and possibly the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as China, India and the Philippines.

Increased quotas for temporary workers and low-skilled workers (both temporary and permanent) seem possible. The Senate's McCain-Kennedy bill in 2005 included an increase of 1.5 million guest farm workers with provision for earning permanent status. Increases in employment visas could result in further experimentation in enforcement by employers and in some collaboration between employers and government.

Changed status for children of unauthorized immigrants: Several proposed amendments to the 14th Amendment's citizenship clause have specified that a U.S.-born child would have automatic citizenship only if at least one parent were a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. Thus far, no such proposals have succeeded to the point of a general vote by either house of Congress.

State and local legislation and enforcement: Some reforms have been attempted at the local level by communities like Hazleton, PA; Riverside, NJ; and Escondido, CA. At the state level, Arizona passed a number of referenda in 2006 in addition to the language referendum referred to above. Most of these reforms appear to be attempts to exercise local control when federal control is perceived as weak or absent. Some seem aimed at limiting local expenses or at seeking redistribution of incomes to cover local expenses. To complement efforts of local and state governments, some in the federal government are seeking to push back responsibilities to the local level.

These local efforts run counter to the norm established in the late 1800s. At that time, the creation of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and construction of the

administration buildings and hospitals on Ellis Island spurred the federal government's action to concentrate responsibility and action at the federal level and to make immigration policy uniform across the country. That uniformity will be at issue today if there is, in fact, a move away from federal to local/state immigration laws and policies.

Note: Source of all data on change in foreign-born percentages by state: Migration Policy Institute; All numbers include U. S. Census Bureau estimates of undocumented immigrants.

References:

1 Individuals born in the following U.S. territories are citizens of the U.S.:

- Puerto Rico, if born on/after Jan 13, 1941
- Guam, if born on or after April 10, 1899
- The US Virgin Islands if born on or after January 17, 1917
- American Samoa
- Swain's Island, administered from American Samoa
- The Northern Mariana Islands, if born on or after November 4, 1986

Children of diplomats to the U.S., however, are NOT automatically granted U.S. citizenship when born in the U.S. (www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidEligibility/downloads/MedicaidCitizenshipFinalRule.pdf)

2 The good moral character clause will generally prevent naturalization by those "who have been arrested or convicted of a crime in the 5 years before application; who have purposefully withheld child-support payments; who have failed to file their tax returns; who are "habitual drunkards"; who have lied to receive government benefits; etc." (www.legal-aid.org/Uploads/ImmNaturalization.pdf)

3 Although naturalized citizens have generally been free of the threat of deportation, a Haitian native was deprived of his citizenship in January 2005 following conviction and serving time in prison on a drug charge. As of November, 2006, he remained in detention as the government tried to deport him.

4 The first sentence of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, often called the "citizenship clause," reads as follows: 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.

5 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/custom/2006/05/26/CU2006052600148.html>

6 Immigrants who suffer certain disabilities that prevent their learning English are not required to do so if they meet other criteria for becoming a naturalized citizen

Article 2 . . .**Family Reunification and Diversity Policies****Immigration Study Brief #4**

This brief (posted on our Web site prior to publication here) is based on LWVUS Immigration Study Committee papers, "Immigration Policy: Family Reunification" and "What Motivates Immigration to America?" by Patricia Hatch and "Immigration: Diversity and Inclusion" by Deborah Macmillan. These papers (including full citations of sources) are available at www.lwv.org

Family Reunification Policies

U.S. immigration laws have always included provisions designating persons eligible or ineligible to enter the country based on the perceived common good. Originally, paupers, those engaged in immoral activities and the physically handicapped were banned. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act restricted entry for immigrants from China. It wasn't until 1924 that the first quota act affecting non-Asians was passed; it set limits on immigrants from the southern and eastern portions of Europe.

The current policy originated with the Immigration Act of 1965. The new law eliminated the national origin quota system that had favored immigrants from Europe to the exclusion of those from other parts of the world. It created a system favoring diversity of country of birth. The 1965 Act also provided a "family preference" quota framework that systematized the sponsorship of relatives of legal immigrants, emphasizing the reunification of immigrant families.

Among current immigrants, family unity is one of the most powerful motivators. Since 1965, between 50 and 70 percent of U.S. immigrant visas distributed annually have been allotted to close family members of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents. During the past ten years, more than 200,000 persons per year have been admitted to the U.S. as beneficiaries of family preference visas.

How effective is the current policy in reuniting immigrant families? For spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens, the wait to reunite is often less than a year. However, many legal permanent residents ("green card holders") are not so fortunate. These individuals, who themselves have waited

many years to enter the U.S. legally, often precede their spouses and children to the U.S. in order to find work and housing and save money for air tickets for the rest of the family. They soon learn that family preference category visa quotas and processing backlogs can delay the legal reunification of their family in the U.S. for many years. For example, the spouse or minor child of a legal permanent resident from Mexico can expect to wait more than a decade to receive a visa to enter the U.S.

These deficiencies in the system force many families to resort to illegal immigration rather than wait for years for permission to enter legally. The result is that a significant percentage of the estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. are the spouses and minor children of legal permanent residents who have been approved for family-based visas but are caught in the years-long preference category logjam.

Clearly, the current family reunification system is not working well for many legal permanent residents and their immediate family members. Furthermore, the lack of a reasonably timely family reunification option within the legal system is contributing to the breakdown of the integrity of the U.S. immigration system.

There are no easy fixes for our family-based immigration system. However, unless our nation finds the political courage to come to grips with the short- and long-term implications of our current untenable policy, tens of thousands of families desperate to be together rather than face interminable separation are likely to continue resorting to unauthorized immigration.

Diversity Policies

Diversity of country of birth is integral to who we are, and what our country is, but not everyone agrees about how much value to place on diversity.

The U.S. both caps the number of immigrants from a given country and allows for a "diversity lottery" to ensure at least some possibility of entry from all countries. Despite these policies, Mexican-born immigrants composed a predominant segment of the entire U.S. foreign-born population in 2000, and are predominant to an even greater degree today.

Critics argue that today's immigrants are too different – they hang on to their culture, stay connected to their native countries and continue to speak their native languages. Proponents of the diversity policy say these connections

have always been a part of immigrants' lives, and that today's immigrants own their homes, intermarry with other Americans and are learning English at rates as high, or higher, than was true for earlier ethnic groups.

The differing viewpoints may result from the larger numbers of immigrants living in communities that have never had immigrant populations before. Change can be difficult to manage, particularly such sudden change as many communities have experienced with respect to immigration and diversity. Generally, and over time, change, immigration and diversity have been embraced in this country's communities more frequently than they have been rejected.

Article 3 . . .

Immigration and the Economy

By Chris Carson

Chris Carson, LWV of Glendale-Burbank, CA, is a member of the Immigration Study Committee.

Although religious motivation significantly impacted the founding and early development of American colonies, economic motives outweighed religious ones beginning fairly early in our country's history. This is reflected not only in the influx of voluntary immigrants looking for a better life, but also in the importation of indentured servants or slaves to fill the labor requirements of colonists' farms and businesses. Immigration was at the core of nation-building, so much so that the Declaration of Independence listing the wrongdoings of King George III alleged that the British government had hindered and obstructed immigration into the colonies.¹

Labor Force Requirements

Over the course of American history, numerous businesses have targeted specific immigrant groups for employment. For instance, they brought in the Chinese to work on the railroads, the Irish, in many parts of the country, to work in railroad building or mining, and Eastern and Southern Europeans for manufacturing enterprises. Overall, the flow of immigration throughout the 19th and early 20th century was directly tied to the strength or weakness of the American economy; levels of immigration fluctuated widely in response to economic cycles of boom and panic in this country.² Generally, peak immigration flows coincided with periods of fundamental transformations of the American economy.³

The current high volume of immigration is second only to that of a hundred years ago, prior to the introduction of significant immigration restrictions during the 1920's. This is the result of a complex interaction of changing U.S. demographics, global developments and a growing U.S. economy.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 56 million new jobs will be created in this country between 2002 and 2012. During this same period, more than 75 million Americans will retire, and declining native-born fertility rates will be approaching replacement level. Half of the new jobs will require no more than a high school education, but native-born workers are becoming more educated with every decade. Arguably the most important statistic for an understanding of the immigration situation in this country is that in 1960, half of all American men dropped out of high school to look for unskilled work, whereas less than ten percent do so now.⁴

The shortfall of unskilled labor—estimated to run to hundreds of thousands of workers a year—is showing up in sector after sector. The construction industry creates some 185,000 jobs annually, and although construction workers now earn between \$30,000 and \$50,000 a year, employers in trades such as masonry and dry-walling are unable to find enough young Americans to do the work.

The prospects for the restaurant business are even bleaker. With 12.5 million workers nationwide, restaurants are the nation's largest private-sector employer, and their demand for labor is expected to grow by 15 percent between 2005 and 2015. But the native-born work force will grow by only ten percent in that period, and the number of 16- to 24-year-old job seekers—the key demographic for the restaurant trade—will not expand at all. So, unless the share of older Americans willing to bus tables and flip hamburgers increases—and in truth, it is decreasing—without immigrants, the restaurant sector will have trouble growing through the next decade.⁵

Entrepreneurship

Immigration also helps fuel the entrepreneurship that is so significant to the growth of the national economy. The four countries with the highest proportionate creation of new businesses are the United States, Canada, Israel and Australia, all countries with high rates of immigration. In the United States, the number of Hispanic-owned businesses has grown at three times the national average, while the number of Asian-owned businesses has grown at twice the national average.⁶

Unemployment Among Immigrants

The informal market mechanisms that connect U.S. demand with foreign supply, particularly from Latin America, are surprisingly efficient. Immigrants already here communicate to their compatriots back home that the job market in one city is flat, while that in another is booming. This results in a just-in-time delivery of workers wherever they are most needed.

Statistics show that immigrants are less likely than natives to be unemployed. The vast majority of immigrants coming to the United States do so in order to work. After all, it is better to be unemployed in your home country than in New York or Chicago. Furthermore, even legal immigrants, who account for about two-thirds of the total influx, are not eligible during their first five to ten years in the United States for welfare transfers that could sustain them during periods of unemployment. And, illegal immigrants receive virtually no such transfers. It is no surprise, then, that labor-force participation among foreign-born men exceeds that of the native-born. In fact, the employment figure for illegal immigrant men is the highest of any group—94 percent employed.

The added societal burden of immigrants on welfare is really not an issue here. Rather than futilely trying to block the realities of supply and demand as current policy does—our immigration policy must address them.

Effect on American Workers

Opponents of immigration often suggest that if employers paid American workers more they could reduce the need for foreign labor. Many industries cannot pay more, because they would then be undercut by imports from abroad. Even in sectors such as construction and hospitality, in which the work must be done in the United States, it is necessary to decide whether it is better to lure an American to a less productive job than he or she is capable of by paying more compensation for less-skilled work. Meanwhile, because they complement rather than compete with most native-born workers (and this in turn attracts additional capital), immigrant workers are a factor in raising rather than lowering most Americans' wages.

Immigration Reform

Some proposals for comprehensive reform are based on certain assumptions about the potential economic benefits of immigration and suggest that the U.S. immigration system should be market-based. The premise of these reform proposals is that enforcement of the legal limits is ineffective

partly because the nation as a whole is ambivalent about how much it wants to control immigration and partly because, as statistics show, it is all but impossible to enforce unrealistic laws. For the past decade or so, market forces have attracted some 1.5-1.8 million skilled and unskilled immigrants to work in the United States each year. However, annual legal quotas admitted only about a million each year. The result is a significant imbalance of workers.

A realistic immigration system is one in which the annual legal intake is more or less equal to the flow generated by supply and demand. The United States currently issues 5,000 visas a year to year-round unskilled workers, when 400,000-500,000 additional such workers are needed to keep the economy growing.

Current immigration law makes a distinction between temporary (non-immigrant) status and permanent (immigrant) status, but more than 60 percent of all permanent residence grants between FY2001 and FY2005 were merely adjustments to the status of people already in the United States rather than new arrivals.⁷ This makes the legal distinction between temporary and permanent almost meaningless. And at the same time, the legal structure has become exceeding complex over the years, with additional sub classifications and exceptions being added to cover special categories of individuals and families. While there are 24 temporary visa categories in the basic law, over the years more than 70 sub-categories have been created.⁸

A legitimate way to assess the role and value of immigration's contribution to America is to consider what would happen if the influx stopped or if those already here left the country. Those who favor comprehensive reform (bring in more workers) believe this would be disastrous. In some regions, they contend, whole sectors of the economy could collapse. The opposition maintains that a cutoff would mean at most a temporary inconvenience for a few employers, who would soon wean themselves away from their dependence on foreign workers.

To assess the relative merits of the two arguments, one should consider the expected impact of the projected demographic changes that will result from the ever-slowing growth of the native-born work force. The business community, long the chief supporters of immigration, argues that there is no reason to forfeit immigrant-driven economic better—not just with the work they do, but because they renew and reinvigorate the country's spirit with their energy, hard work and old-fashioned values. Opponents of increased immigration consider the costs and benefits of

an expanding economy, and place greater emphasis on environmental and cultural issues. They argue for significant restrictions on total immigration.

Clearly, this is a many-faceted debate that arouses great passions, and will continue to do so. There are no easy answers.

References

¹ Astride Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation and Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 24.

² Zolberg, *A Nation by Design*, p. 186.

³ Doris Meissner et al, *Immigration and America's Future: A New Chapter*, (Migration Policy Institute, 2006), p. 1.

⁴ Tamar Jacoby, "'Immigration Nation,'" *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2006, p.52.

⁵ Jacoby, "Immigration Nation," p.52.

⁶ Meissner, *Immigration and America's Future*, p. 8.

⁷ Meissner, *Immigration and America's Future*, p. 33.

⁸ Meissner, *Immigration and America's Future*, p. 37.

In The Spotlight . . .



Leslie Vandivere,
1st Vice President and Mem-
bership Chair

The month's spotlight falls on Leslie Vandivere, our local expert on immigration. Leslie led last May's local immigration program and has overseen the current two-part study.

After graduating from the College of William and Mary, Leslie earned an MBA from the Florida Institute of Technology and a degree from the U.S. Naval War College. After a career as a defense Department contracting officer, she retired and now works part time for the Fairfax County Park Authority. Leslie enjoys "grand-mothering," traveling and volunteering.

A league member since 1976, she has served as president of the LWV of St Mary's County, Maryland and second vice president (education) of the LWV of Maryland. She attends the CHD unit meetings. Leslie has been membership director and on the board for the last four years. In this latter role she has mastered the software to keep track of membership to the point where teaches it to other Leagues in the state.

Her previous Experiences have added much to our League and her dedication is greatly appreciated br all.

Action Report

By Jane Hilder, Action Chair

The bill sponsored by Rep. Tom Davis and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton that would give voting rights in the House of Representatives to DC residents has still not passed in the Senate, although it passed in the House back in April. Expect to hear more about this once Congress returns from the summer recess.

On July 12 the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) passed the package of taxes and fees authorized by the General Assembly this year to pay for local transportation needs in Northern Virginia. Loudoun County Supervisors voted to challenge the NVTA bonding authority, and the Loudoun representative did not support the package of taxes and fees, but the package was passed anyway. It was crucial that representatives of at least two thirds of the population of northern Virginia approve the fees in order for them to pass legally. The court challenges of NVTA authority have so far proven unsuccessful. That package of taxes and fees will go into effect in 2008.

The legislature also approved some local option taxes and fees for transportation, that could be passed individually by local jurisdictions. These included raising the auto registration fee by \$10 per renewal and adding up to 25 cents per hundred on the property tax rate for commercial property. In the past counties have been required to tax commercial and residential property at the same rate. Fairfax County Supervisors were still debating whether to implement these taxes and fees. The BOS will hold a public hearing Sept. 10 to consider the implementation of a higher tax rate on commercial property to finance transportation improvements.

See ACTION, Page 17, Col. 1