



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

## OFFICE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### \*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*

#### **New Study Shows the Economic Power of Immigrants in San Francisco**

*Foreign-born San Francisco residents with a combined spending power of \$7.1 billion contributed \$2.5 billion to the local, state and national economy*

**San Francisco, CA**– The Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs and the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission released new information on the economic contributions of immigrants in San Francisco City and County, revealing that immigrants contribute significantly to the local economy through high rates of tax contributions, spending power and workforce participation. The data, covering all Congressional Districts, was released nationally today by New American Economy (NAE).

Immigrants in San Francisco bring over \$7.1 billion in spending power, and pay over \$2.5 billion in total taxes each year, with \$1.7 billion going annually to the federal government. There are 12,576 immigrant entrepreneurs in San Francisco providing essential services and jobs. Immigrants are over a third of San Francisco's total population and over 70 percent of the City's immigrants are working age (25-64).

"Immigration helps power the local economy. This data is more evidence that immigrants have contributed significantly to the City's cultural and economic success," said Immigrant Rights Commission Chair Celine Kennelly, Executive Director of the Irish Immigration Pastoral Center.

"Immigrants are the heartbeat of San Francisco and the nation," said Adrienne Pon, Executive Director of the Executive Director of the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs.

“Despite facing numerous barriers and unwelcoming policies, they bring resourcefulness, creativity, diversity, a strong work ethic, and the willingness to lay down roots in local communities and contribute resources.”

The NAE study looks at information on Immigrant Demographics, Workforce, Voting Power, Home Ownership, Taxes & Spending Power, and Entrepreneurship based on 2014 economic and tax data. Nationally, immigrants continue to play an important role contributing to local economies as voters, consumers and taxpayers.

- **Voting:** 19.1 million immigrants were eligible to vote in 2014—a group that could have a particularly important role in future election cycles.
- **Home Ownership:** The nation’s more than 40 million immigrants collectively increased U.S. housing wealth by \$3.7 trillion in 2014. Much of this was possible because immigrants move into once declining neighborhoods, helping to revitalize local communities and making them more attractive and safe for all residents.
- **Taxes & Spending Power:** Nationally, immigrants earned \$1.3 trillion in 2014, contributed \$105 billion in state and local taxes, paid almost \$224 billion in federal taxes, and had nearly \$927 billion in spending power.

In San Francisco, there are 145,946 eligible immigrant voters and 37,279 homes owned by immigrants. Immigrant entrepreneurs play an important role as employers and contributors to the local tax base.

“San Francisco’s economy is the result of hardworking entrepreneurial immigrants from all over the world who have made significant contributions to making this a world-class city,” said San Francisco Chamber of Commerce Interim President & CEO Dennis Conaghan.

However, despite substantial evidence of their contributions to a strong economy and strong America, immigrants continue to face backlash and bias. On February 16, 2016, community advocates organized “A Day Without Immigrants,” a national boycott to protest the new administration’s immigration policies. In San Francisco’s Calle 24 Latino Cultural District, Theresa Pasion, Ruben Ibarra and Ida Ibarra, co-owners of La Palma Mexicatessen established in 1953, joined the boycott. Pasion explained, “We closed, not out of self-interest for our business, but to stand behind the larger message of who we are as immigrants in this country. It is the foundation of the American Dream to come to the U.S. and have the opportunity to build a better future for our families.” Pasion hopes the financial impact of Thursday’s boycott is captured in some way.

“Our city’s immigrant workers come from all walks of life. No matter where they started from, they work hard, contribute to the economy and are the backbone of our local labor force. The San Francisco Labor Council and our immigration center, We Rise SF, will continue to support all workers,” said Tim Paulson, Executive Director of the San Francisco Labor Council.

For more information on the NAE study, visit [www.sfgov.org/oceia](http://www.sfgov.org/oceia).

**Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs** – the San Francisco Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) is a policy, compliance, direct services and grantmaking office with a vision of a safe, engaged and inclusive San Francisco where everyone can contribute and thrive. OCEIA’s mission is to develop inclusive policies and integrated immigrant assistance programs that lead to full civic, economic and linguistic integration. Programs include Civic Engagement, Citizenship, Community Safety, Day Laborers, DreamSF Fellows, integrated immigrant services, and language access grants and services. OCEIA also staffs the San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission. Website: [www.sfgov.org/oceia](http://www.sfgov.org/oceia).

**Immigrant Rights Commission**- The San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission (OCEIA) is a citizen advisory body appointed by the Mayor and Board of Supervisors. The IRC advises City officials and departments on issues and policies related to immigrants who live or work in San Francisco. Established in 1997 the IRC consists of fifteen (15) voting members, eleven (11) who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and four (4) who are appointed by the Mayor. At least eight members must be immigrants to the United States and each member of the Commission serves for a term of two years. Website: [www.sfgov.org/oceia/immigrant-rights-commission](http://www.sfgov.org/oceia/immigrant-rights-commission).

**New American Economy** (NAE) brings together more than 500 Republican, Democratic and Independent mayors and business leaders who support immigration reforms that will help create jobs for Americans today. NAE members include mayors of more than 35 million people nationwide and business leaders of companies that generate more than \$1.5 trillion and employ more than 4 million people across all sectors of the economy, from Agriculture to Aerospace, Hospitality to High Tech and Media to Manufacturing. NAE members understand that immigration is essential to maintaining the productive, diverse and flexible workforce that America needs to ensure prosperity over the coming generations. Learn more at [www.NewAmericanEconomy.org](http://www.NewAmericanEconomy.org).

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