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## Symposium examines immigration issues

By Daniel Scarpinato

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PHOENIX — A week after an election that included sharp rhetoric about illegal immigration, experts and policymakers met here to try to boil the issue down to its core facts and forecast its political future.

For roughly 100 attendees at Thursday's National Symposium on Immigration, held at the state Capitol, it meant putting aside political differences for the day and focusing on the facts.

The Arizona Daily Star was one of several sponsors of the event, which was facilitated by The Communications Institute, a California-based nonprofit organization. The Rand Corp., the University of Arizona, the University of Southern California, Congressional Quarterly and the Thomas R. Brown Foundations also participated.

The symposium opened with an overview of the economics behind immigration. Dean Yang, a University of Michigan professor of public policy, said more than half of immigrants are able to find work in the United States within less than a month of arriving here.

"What this means basically is for everyone in developing countries, the income gains from migration are not just incremental — they're substantial. They're huge," he said.

Later, panelists discussed why with overwhelming public support for immigration reform, politicians have failed to successfully solve the issue on a federal level.

Several agreed that neither party wants to reveal the ideological divides in its ranks.

"The Republican Party still has to mend from the split it has experienced these past two years," said Bill Beach, director of the Heritage Foundation's Center for Data Analysis. Democrats, he said, have their own divisions on immigration.

The event attracted Tucsonan Julie Rigoli, a government teacher at Amphitheater High School.

She said the symposium "confirms my conviction that this is not simply an issue at all regarding economics or even national policy, but it has to do with our attitudes, and that's kind of an unspoken, underlying premise. I think what was not said spoke louder than what was said."

When asked whether she thought the new Congress would tackle immigration, she said: "I think it will continue to be a free-for-all. Globalization is here to stay, and we need to recognize that Latin America is part of that."

Chris Simcox, president and founder of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, was also pessimistic about the prospect for immigration reform.

"I agreed with every single thing I heard," Simcox said. "This has exposed that the government works with a paradigm of corruption in a sense," in failing to enforce immigration laws.

• Contact reporter Daniel Scarpinato at 807-7789 or [dscarpinato@azstarnet.com](mailto:dscarpinato@azstarnet.com).

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