



Expedited Citizenship for Sale: Estimating the Effect of Executive Order 13269 on Noncitizen Military Enlistments

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

- This study is the first of its kind to utilize empirical data to analyze the impact of Executive Order 13269, a recruiting strategy enacted by former president, George W. Bush, in 2002. Executive Order 13269 provides expedited citizenship to noncitizens who join the U.S. military. The purpose of the Executive Order is to implement a unique military recruiting technique that involves no direct financial obligation to military budgets.
- The authors found that there was no overall effect of the Executive Order on the number of noncitizen enlistments into the military. However, the Executive Order appears to have shifted the type of noncitizens enlisting in the military and the service in which they choose to enlist. In particular, the offer of expedited citizenship led to an increased percentage of noncitizen enlistees with a college or advanced degree, and led to a shift in enlistments from more combat-intensive military branches, such as the Marines, to less combat-intensive, such as the Air Force and Coast Guard.

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ABSTRACT:

“This article estimates the effect of offering an expedited citizenship application process to noncitizens for joining the US military. Executive Order (EO) 13269, enacted in July of 2002, allowed noncitizens to apply for US citizenship immediately upon joining the military, effectively reducing the waiting time that is required to apply for citizenship from 3 years to 1 day. We identify the effect of the policy by using administrative personnel data on the universe of military enlistees between 1999 and 2010 along with a difference-in-differences (DD) strategy that uses accessions amongst citizens as the control group. Overall, we find no effect of the offer of expedited citizenship on total accessions amongst noncitizens. However, this overall null effect masks significant shifts of noncitizen enlistments out of combat intensive services and into ‘safe’ services. These results provide the first empirical evidence about this important, and relatively costless, recruiting policy.”

Implications

FOR PRACTICE

Noncitizens interested in U.S. citizenship should consider military enlistment as an alternative to the typical path to citizenship. Executive Order 13269 allows noncitizens to gain expedited citizenship after only one day of service, shortening the previous requirement of three years of honorable service. By joining the military, noncitizens will have access to the many benefits that military service can offer during and after service. Some of these benefits are specialized training, health insurance, and a competitive salary. Military service also offers an inclusive community of service members. Relationships with citizen service members could help noncitizen service members assimilate into American society. Both noncitizen and citizen veterans should familiarize themselves with the plethora of resources available to them. Resources typically include local support groups, employment assistance, and educational opportunities, such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill. In addition to familiarizing themselves with military resources, new-citizen veterans should become active citizens by utilizing voting privileges, getting involved with community initiatives and using the resources available to veterans in their area. New citizen veterans bring a unique dynamic to the United States after service by adding diversity, cultural awareness, and a newfound sense of patriotism.

FOR POLICY

Drawing conclusions from the results of this analysis, the Department of Defense might recruit from higher-educated groups of noncitizens who have specific skillsets such as foreign language fluency, cultural awareness, and technical knowledge that is not readily available in typical citizen recruitment and military accessions. To increase the number of military enlistments of noncitizens and fill the gap in current military vacancies, policymakers might implement legislation that offers financial incentives or other benefits to noncitizens who enlist in the military. Policymakers might reform current immigration policy to include additional benefits for noncitizens who join the military, such as granting citizenship to family members of service members. The VA and policymakers could create and implement additional transitional assistance programs to assist noncitizen residents in transitioning to new-citizen veterans. The VA and policymakers could also implement additional transitional assistance programs for the families. Furthermore, the VA might design programs to account for the inherent multi-cultural diversity of noncitizens who join the military to better address their specific needs once they become citizen veterans.

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

When assessing the impact of the Executive Order, future researchers should be cognizant of unobserved heterogeneity across varying demographics. Future researchers should seek to determine the omitted variables that may have affected the results of this study, such as geographic location and socioeconomic status. Future researchers should also explore the effects family perspectives, employment, and educational status have on noncitizens enlisting in the U.S. military. In this study, links were found between military accession and noncitizens of varying race, education, and gender variables. Future researchers should study why certain demographics of noncitizens are more likely to join the United States military than others. Future research should assess the variations between branches of military service to understand why certain branches have higher accessions of noncitizens than others. Studying the variation between branches could also shed light on successful recruiting practices. Finally, future researchers should study the types of benefits noncitizens who enlist in the U.S. military desire.

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