



The Daily Dish

October 23rd Edition

LAURA COLLINS | OCTOBER 23, 2014

Less than two weeks are left until the second open enrollment period for the ACA, and Americans are still confused by the administration's hallmark law. A [new survey](#) by American Institutes for Research shows only 20 percent could answer a question on how much a visit would cost. The study also found younger people understand the law less, only answering 55 percent of the questions correctly.

The Social Security Administration announced a 1.7 percent raise for this year's cost of living adjustments. According to [Fox Business](#), this is "another reflection of a sluggish economic recovery that has kept inflation low." This increase is not intended to provide an economic boost, but just to make sure that social security keeps up with the economy.

Eakinomics: Nothing to Worry About– Guest Authored by Laura Collins, AAF Director of Immigration Policy

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services recently began the contracting process; bids to supply it with card stock for work permits and green cards over the next five years. This routine contract bid raised red flags, leading to speculation that President Obama is planning an aggressive executive action on immigration that is massive and unprecedented in scope. The facts on the ground indicate that this is wild and unfounded. While the president has been promising executive action for months, a routine contract bid is not reason for inferring what the actions will be.

This handwringing found in some quarters is due to two elements of the contract: (1) the option for USCIS to request more card stock in years 2 through 5 of the contract, the so-called "surge"; and (2) the acknowledgement that the surge would support "possible future immigration reform initiative requirements". Both of these elements are unremarkable and strike me as an agency making reasonable future plans.

First, there will be a new Congress in 2015. Immigration reform is still needed—to overhaul an inefficient system and to jump start economic growth—and a new Congress may be up to the challenge of legislating change. House Speaker John Boehner has hinted that immigration reform legislation has a chance in 2015, and the public appetite for reform is still strong.

Second, President Obama has continually promised (and pushed back) executive action on immigration. This is not a surprise to anyone that follows the immigration debate. This contract bid should not be used to try to determine what this executive action will look like or how broad it will be. The contract's terms are just contingencies—USCIS is being prudent by being prepared.

Third, we will elect a new president in 2016. This contract will run into the beginning of the new president's term. If immigration reform has not yet passed by the time the new president takes office, it may be one of the new administration's priorities.

The elements causing alarm are mere contingencies, the product of an agency giving itself reasonable options as

it looks ahead to the next five years. A routine contract proposal should not be interpreted as more than that.

From the Forum

[State-by-State Estimates of Individual Mandate Payments](#) by Conor Ryan, AAF Health Care Data Analyst

[Major Energy Producing States Have Fared Better During Recovery](#) by Ben Gitis, AAF Policy Analyst; Andy Winkler, AAF Director of Housing Policy; Gordon Gray, AAF Director of Fiscal Policy; and Catrina Rorke, AAF Director of Energy and Environmental Policy