

Activity: Immigration in the 1990s – Proposition 187

Background: How did demographic trends and a changing California economy in the 1990s create a backlash against immigration, only to be followed by another swing in the ideological pendulum? This lesson examines how economic and demographic forces affect the strategies of the political parties, and demonstrates how policies like Proposition 187 can produce unintended and surprising consequences.

Objective: Examine the causes and effects of immigration policy, and analyze how the proposal and passage of Proposition 187 in California had both intended and unintended consequences.

Examine the [text of Proposition 187](#). Answer the questions below as you analyze the document.

This document shows the language of *Proposition 187*. This proposition passed in 1994 with nearly 59% of California voters approving it (~5M votes in favor and 3.5M votes against), however it was never enforced as law because a federal court struck it down as unconstitutional.

Read “SECTION 1: Findings and Declaration”
According to those who proposed this law, what was the reason and purpose of Proposition 187?

Sections 2 and 3 create specific penalties for crimes. What are those crimes and what was the proposed punishment?

Sections 5-8 create new restrictions. What are they? What are the *intended consequences* of these restrictions?

What *unintended consequences* do you think may have occurred had Prop 187 gone into effect? Explain your answer?

View the film [Immigration in the 1990s: Proposition 187](#) and answer the following questions.

What did supporters of Prop 187 view as the central problem with the U.S. immigration system in the early 1990s?

How did opponents of Prop 187 explain their position in the film?

Identify and describe at least two

examples of how Prop 187 was used by politicians.

Cause and Effect Analysis: After watching the film, identify and describe three instances of Cause and Effect. Think about factors that led to the passage of Prop 187, the immediate aftermath, and the long term implications. Be sure to identify the cause/effect AND provide a short explanation.

Possible Causes/Effects may include: Increased political activism by those of both sides of the immigration debate, number of Latinx elected officials, political make-up of California, national attention paid to the issue of immigration, the type of rhetoric regarding immigration, etc.

	CAUSE	EFFECT
Example #1		
Description		
Example #2		
Description		
Example #3		
Description		

After examining the text of the proposition and viewing the film, what do you think is the most important legacy of Proposition 187? Defend your answer with evidence from the resources you examined.

Examining Historic Immigration Policy: Throughout U.S. history, the federal government (and sometimes states) have enacted laws restricting or promoting immigration. Examine three other instances of immigration policy changes and make a comparison to the goals and/or effects of Proposition 187. You may choose from the list below, or include another policy of your teacher's choosing.

- [Pew Research: How immigration laws and rules have changed through history](#) (This timeline provides numerous examples, several of which are included below in greater detail)
- [1790 Nationality Act](#)

- [Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798](#)
- [Immigration Act of 1864](#)
- [Chinese Exclusion Act \(1882\)](#)
- [Immigration Act of 1891](#)
- [Immigration Act of 1917](#)
- [Immigration Act of 1924](#)
- [Bracero Agreement \(1942\)](#)
- [Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 \(McCarran-Walter Act\)](#)
- [Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 \(Hart-Celler Act\)](#)
- [Immigration Reform and Control Act \(1986\)](#)
- [Arizona - SB 1070](#) (Unlike the others, this is a state-level law)
- [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(2012\)](#)

Immigration Legislation:	What were the key elements of this law? What policy did it enact or what programs did it create?	How was this law similar or different to Prop 187? Think about the policy, causes and effects.

Assessment Question: Although America is often described as a “nation of immigrants,” friction of immigration policy has been commonplace. After analyzing several different examples of immigration policy, what generalizations can you make?

Has America become more or less welcoming to immigrants over time?