

Statement of The Immigrant Restriction League (1911)

The Immigrant Restriction league was founded in 1894 by a group of Boston professors, lawyers, and philanthropists, including Henry Cabot Lodge. They advocated for limiting immigration. They did not want to stop immigration completely, but wanted to filter out the undesirables. Their proposal helped Congress approve the need for a literacy test, but presidential vetoes prevented them from becoming law.

The league believes that the present laws are inadequate and that further selection of immigration is necessary and desirable from (1) the social and moral standpoint, (b) the economic standpoint, (c) the eugenic standpoint. The league recommends that-

1. A reading test for aliens of 15 years or over in any language or dialect the alien may choose
2. An increase of the present head tax to at least \$10.
3. Requiring immigrants to be in possession of money for their support while securing employment; say, \$50 for single immigrant and heads of families and \$25 additional for a wife and each minor child
4. Abolishing the existing provision for admitting immigrants on bond
5. Increasing the fines on steamship companies to \$500 and extending the system of fines to all cases where the ineligibility of the alien could have been detected at embarkation by careful inspection
6. Providing for the deportation of aliens without time limit, for causes, other than due to accident, whether arising prior to or subsequent to landing....

The league believes that, great as is the burden of aliens who fall into the definite class known as the defectives and delinquents, there is an even greater burden upon and danger to the community from the immigration of large numbers of aliens of low intelligence, poor physique, deficient in energy, ability, and thrift. Many of these have to be supported by public or private charity, are a menace to the average of our population. The league believes that a considerable portion of this class would be excluded by the legislation that it proposes, as experience shows that poverty, ignorance, and incapacity in general go together....

...what demand there is for free immigration has always come from employers who want to force wages down regardless of the effect upon the community....That the immigration of cheap labor has just this effect, forcing the workman already here to lower his standard of living and often lose his job.....Labor economically cheap is moreover never socially cheap....

U.S. Congress, Immigration Commission, "Statement of the Immigration Restriction League," *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, vol. 41, 1911, 103-107, extracted from *Voices of the American Past*, 343-344