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Immigration

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The highly-charged emotion regarding the subject of immigration into the U.S. is one that will not be going away anytime soon. An adequate exploration of the topic of immigration requires additional breakdown as to the legal and illegal aspects of the issue.

Legal Immigration

There is only limited debate as to the desirability of allowing thousands of legal immigrants into the United States annually. Many of these legal immigrants fill critical jobs within highly technical industries, strengthening America's role of being competitive in the world. Others are allowed into the U.S. because of political developments in their respective countries which could threaten their lives if they were forced to return to their homes.

A highly competitive global marketplace requires that American companies have access to the "best and brightest" around the world. Tens of thousands of American jobs have resulted from highly skilled and intelligent foreigners being allowed access to this country to live and work.

Nowhere is this fact more relevant than in the nation's technology sector, where many great American companies were founded or strengthened by attracting skilled foreign nationals to relocate to America. Many of these highly talented people have ultimately gained American citizenship.

One unfortunate development resulting from the horrific events of September 11, 2001 was a move by the U.S. Congress to severely restrict the flow of foreign nationals into the U.S. Immigration quotas were simply tightened too much, with

many companies subsequently frustrated in their attempts to attract global talent. Many foreign nationals who had been attending American universities also found their ability to stay or gain access to the U.S. denied.

One detrimental result of such legal immigration overkill has been to push highly skilled people away from this nation. The subsequent homes established in other countries benefit companies in those nations. It is our collective loss.



American corporate leaders have had frequent discussions with their Congressional representatives about the harm being done to their companies. It is in America's best interest for the Congress to increase the legal flow of talented immigrants to the U.S. Some progress is finally being made.

Illegal Immigration

The enormous flow of illegal immigrants (or illegal aliens as some prefer to describe them) into this country has emerged as a hot button issue in recent years. This issue promises to be front and center as the 2008 election cycle approaches.

There are numerous proposals as to how to limit the flow of additional illegal immigrants to this country, as well as what might be done with the estimated 12 million illegal aliens already here. The majority of these illegal immigrants

are deemed to be from Mexico, with the balance primarily from other poorer nations in Latin America.

President Bush proposed a program of defining these people as “guest workers.” His proposal required these illegal American residents to step forward and identify themselves, pay a fine in many cases, be required to return home, and then apply for this guest worker status. His plan also provides a path for many of these people to eventually apply for and gain American citizenship.

It is no wonder the President’s plan has met with substantial resistance from both sides of the political aisle. The “theory” of the President’s plan is one thing. Human nature is something quite different.

The vast majority of these illegal workers are not going to step out of the shadows and jump through a variety of hoops in order to clarify their status in this nation. In their minds, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Many members of Congress also see the eventual citizenship issue as unacceptable.

Other major proposals have called for much stronger enforcement of existing laws. These proposals include frequent raids on American employers likely to be employing illegal aliens, with the quick deportation of those workers who cannot provide solid proof of citizenship or viable documentation for being in the U.S.

Other proposals suggest that substantial fines or penalties for U.S. companies knowingly using illegal aliens should be mandatory. This logic suggests that many of these illegal workers will willingly return home if they realize that American employment opportunities are severely limited.

Where You Sit

Members of both major political parties have been inundated by their local constituents with opinions regarding the illegal worker issue. It is also human nature that one’s view on the issue can be highly impacted by one’s role within the economy.

Americans who have little or no employment contact with illegal immigrants are likely to support stronger

enforcement of existing laws and rapid deportation of illegal aliens. They likely encourage or support politicians who promote such a proactive approach.

However, employers in such industries as hospitality, retail trade, construction, and landscaping strongly support the idea of leaving well enough alone. Many recognize that their ability to be adequately staffed requires the hiring of many immigrants.

Many of these employers would argue that their employees are not illegal immigrants, but in fact hold “documents” supporting their ability to work. Many of these employers might begrudgingly acknowledge that the usage of fake documentation is rampant. These employers might also suggest that it is not their responsibility to verify the authenticity of such documentation.

More Widespread Agreement

The one major immigration issue that draws more widespread support is that of enforcing American borders, primarily our southern border with Mexico. Most U.S. residents largely support curtailing the flow of additional illegal immigrants to the U.S., even as they disagree regarding the issue of the estimated 12 million illegal aliens now here. Some of these citizens strongly support the building of a 700-mile double wall to limit access to the U.S. Others would suggest that such a wall is too costly and would be largely ineffective.

Employment Impact

Major critics of the U.S. Government’s inability to limit the flow of illegal immigrants to this country argue that these people are depressing average American wages (by their willingness to work for lower wages) and also taking jobs that could be held by American workers. Such critics would suggest that American job gains have been severely impacted by the flow of illegal immigrants. The reality that the American economy is essentially at full employment, with solid job gains and rising real wages in recent years, severely limits their emotional arguments.

“TEA”ser

Few things are more satisfying than seeing your own children have teenagers of their own.

—Doug Larson



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