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HOW ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IMPACTS CONSTITUENCIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS (PART I)

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, BORDER SECURITY, AND CLAIMS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

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HOW ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IMPACTS CONSTITUENCIES: PERSPECTIVES FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS (PART I)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION,
BORDER SECURITY, AND CLAIMS,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:09 p.m., in Room 2237, Rayburn House Office Building, the Honorable John N. Hostettler (Chair of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. The Subcommittee will come to order. As a result of the necessity to accommodate schedules for members of the panel that will be leaving, we'll start at this time.

This hearing is the first in a series of hearings concerning the impact of illegal immigration on local constituencies, and who better to explain what is going on around the country than Members of Congress from impacted areas.

Today, we have three Members whose districts are actually on or near the border with Mexico and New Mexico and Texas, and we also have our colleague from Chicago.

It is appropriate to begin this hearing series with an examination mainly of those border districts because they bear the brunt of much illegal alien traffic, even for illegal aliens who settle elsewhere.

Next week, we plan to have Members from North Carolina, California, and New York, Georgia, and other parts of the country. Each of these Members and their districts have been heavily impacted by the flow and settlement of illegal aliens. Cities and towns around the country are negatively impacted by the heavy toll on infrastructure, the costs of emergency and non-emergency health care, primary and secondary education, and, of course, the loss of jobs to our American population.

In addition, there is social impact in the form of additional crime, high populations, and damage to the environment.

We should also not forget the national security danger to the country of having an estimated 10 million illegal aliens in the country, when no one knows who they are and what their intent is.

Surely, for most of them, they intend to work and perhaps settle here. But a small handful of undocumented illegal aliens may pose the danger of terrorists attacking our country once again.

If there is something Members of Congress can agree on, it is perhaps that illegal alien situations should be brought under control.

Before Congress decides on legislation to gain control over those illegal aliens who are here to work, we must look at the overall impact to our constituents so that any problems can be addressed in that legislation and not be ignored.

Do illegal aliens lower wages for Americans? We examined this at a hearing on this issue earlier this year. If they arguably provide cheaper goods for consumers, is the cost of their work here worth the benefit? Will the taxes collected from illegal workers cover the cost in public subsidies and benefits that American taxpayers have been paying? What is the cost for infrastructure? What is the cost for emergency care for illegal aliens? What is the cost of increased crime and population? Do counties that border Mexico bear the lion's share of these costs?

For the border States, the cost of even legal traffic on infrastructure is enormous. Please look at the chart on the wall to my left, your right, and you will see that last year 121 million passenger vehicles and 11 million trucks legally crossed land borders with 326 million passengers.

The Department of Transportation reported in 2003 that the number of persons entering the U.S. legally was 33.7 million at the Arizona border; 90.5 million at the California border; 1.8 million at the New Mexico border; and 119.9 million at the Texas border.

In FY 2000, Border Patrol agents apprehended almost 1.7 million persons for illegally entering the country.

Last year, the Border Patrol apprehended 1.16 million. The Border Patrol in the Tucson Sector alone apprehended 230,000 illegal aliens in 2004.

The cost of emergency care is likewise enormous for border States as well. The U.S.-Mexico Border Counties Coalition estimates that more than $200 million in 2000 was spent by border counties for undocumented alien health care.

And for the Members of the Committee, a chart showing those counties affected is to our right.

The American Hospital Association reported that Southwest border hospitals reported uncompensated care totaling nearly $832 million in the year 2000.

Any increased crime rates due to illegal immigration is both a social and an economic cost. The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas conducted a study in March of 2003 entitled "The Impact of Illegal Immigration and Enforcement on Border Crime Rates."

As you can see from these projected charts, it found that border enforcement is significantly negatively correlated to violent crime rates and poverty crime rates in Southwest border counties. My chart to the right shows.

Instead of going over many statistics myself, let me allow the witness Members to tell the story of their own districts in their own words since they know the local conditions better.

At this time, I yield now to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Ms. Jackson Lee, for purposes of an opening statement.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. You're very kind, and I thank the witnesses, my colleagues, for their pres-

ence. I notice that Texas is quite well represented this morning—or this afternoon. Let me thank them and let me also thank Mr. Gutierrez for his time. He serves in a very important capacity, and we welcome his insight on this very important issue.

I want us to discern the truth, and I hope as my colleagues make their presentation in the backdrop of their minds will be the longstanding principle that we are a nation of laws, and we are a nation of immigrants.

I can't imagine that anyone could testify to their absolute presence in the United States, short of Native Americans. And so as we proceed on the question of how illegal immigration impacts constituencies, let us walk gingerly, because I'm reminded of the 1800's and the early 1900's, when large migration of immigrants came to the United States—and I would venture to challenge my Chairman and my colleagues to be able to document that every single one of those individuals came here in legal status.

But what we do know is that those individuals provided—were provided an opportunity to access legalization, and ultimately provided the contributions necessary to build a great and powerful and wonderful America.

It's important to maintain a proper perspective on this subject. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are talking about people, although some undocumented immigrants come to the United States for untoward purposes, illegal immigration consists primarily of people who are coming to the United States to seek a better life.

As I make that comment, let me say that I join my colleagues in accepting the responsibility and the challenge of border security. It must be done in a manner that shows the American people that we mean business, and that we are working with our allies and neighbors to mean business.

And so, strengthening our Border Patrol agents, providing them with the equipment that they need, ensuring that their necessary resources—detention beds—to protect the Nation in the instance of OTMs that come and do not then meet their requirements in terms of going to their court appointment is an absolute imperative.

But at the same time, we must find a way to reach America so that they can understand the balance, the prosperity, and the generosity that has occurred in the United States because of immigrants.

This point is illustrated by an observation that Stanley Mailman and Steve Yaylov made recently on the term "illegal alien." They said an undocumented alien performing construction work is not an outlaw engaged in illegal activity such as bookmaking or burglary. Rather, the work is lawful and legitimate. It simply happens to be work for which the alien is ineligible or disqualified.

That is cited in undocumented workers seeking personal injury compensation.

America was founded by immigrants seeking freedom and opportunity. It created new jobs by establishing new businesses, spending their incomes on American goods and services, paying taxes, and raising the productivity of the United States businesses.

Throughout American history, immigrants have helped build American cities, towns, farms, businesses, and cultural institutions.

Unfortunately, the presence of millions of undocumented workers in our communities also has had in the past negative consequences.

Our failed immigration policies have encouraged employers who use foreign workers to lower labor standards and working conditions for all who labor in the United States—citizens and lawful permanent of the United States, as well as undocumented workers.

We need an increase in the minimum wage. We need to ensure that the prevailing wages are paid. We also need to find out how we can fix our broken health system, and I can assure you that there are immigrants in my community, some undocumented, who are willing to pay for their health care. We've just got to put a system in place.

Our current legal framework also makes it nearly impossible for many immigrant workers, particularly the undocumented to exercise their legal rights. Fear of deportation, fear of losing their livelihoods is enough to silence workers. This encourages such unscrupulous employers to hire and exploit undocumented workers instead of hiring American workers.

We must reinforce the value of American workers, and we must break the cartels' backs who bring in unsuspecting and victimized individuals who are attempting to cross the border utilized by mules and others who are bringing them in in dangerous conditions. We must stop the devastation of Victoria, Texas. It must not happen again.

We must also recognize the U.S. Department of Labor has determined that the poultry industry, nearly half of which consists of immigrant workers, has been as much as 100 percent out of compliance with Federal wage and hour laws. Also the Labor Department estimates that more than half of the country's garment factories violate wage and hour laws and more than 75 percent have violated health and safety laws.

Workplaces that are dangerous for immigrant workers are equally dangerous for those in the United States.

Let me also say that collectively we recognize this problem. Mr. Chairman, I am hoping that, as we listen to the testimony, it will be balanced.

I am gratified for the teamwork that many of us have engaged with our other colleagues, particularly, for example, in the area of Katrina, when we saw that there were some conflicts between American workers and undocumented, it was the combination of Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Hispanic Caucus to come to work together to ensure that the laws are not broken and that we address those issues and that American workers are protected.

We can work together, but we cannot work together in a manner that scapegoats us and does not, if you will, Mr. Chairman, balance the good and the bad and the call to the United States to address the question of comprehensive immigration reform.

With that I yield back, and welcome the panelists this afternoon.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I thank the gentlelady. Without objection, all Members' opening statements will be made a part of the record. We generally have opening statements by Members of the Subcommittee, but given the time constraints of our panel members, we will move into introduction of the panel members.

First of all, Congressman Henry Bonilla represents the 23rd District of Texas, which spans close to 800 miles of the international border with Mexico.

Congressman Bonilla was elected to Congress in 1992, which marked the first time a Hispanic Republican was elected to Congress from Texas. As Member of the House Appropriations Committee, he chairs the Subcommittee on Agriculture, and sits on the Subcommittees on Foreign Operations and Defense.

Prior to his election to Congress, most of the Congressman's career was in television news. He started as a reporter in San Antonio, Texas, and then became a producer for several stations throughout the country. Most recently, he was executive producer for public affairs at KENS in San Antonio.

Congressman Bonilla earned a bachelor of journalism degree from the University of Texas at Austin.

Congressman John Culberson has represented the Seventh District of Texas since 2000. Congressman Culberson serves on the House Appropriations Committee. He is a Member of the Subcommittee on Transportation and the Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and NASA. He is also a part of the Republican Whip Team.

Prior to his election to Congress, John Culberson served in the Texas House of Representatives for 14 years. He was elected to the legislature while he was a law student. During that period, he practiced law as a civil defense attorney. He has worked in political consulting and advertising.

Congressman Culberson earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Southern Methodist University, and his J.D. degree from South Texas College of Law in Houston.

Congressman Stevan Pearce is serving his second term in Congress, representing the Second District of New Mexico. He serves on the Homeland Security, Financial Services, and Resources Committees.

Formerly, Congressman Pearce was elected to the New Mexico House of Representatives in 1996, and reelected in 1998.

While in the legislature, he served as Republican Caucus Chairman. He and his wife owned and operated Lee Fishing Tools, an oilfield services firm. They were honored by the Association of Commerce and Industry with an award for outstanding business in New Mexico. Additionally, the Congressman served as a pilot in the United States Air Force, where he received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal.

Congressman Pearce graduated from New Mexico State University with a B.B.A. degree in Economics, where he was also elected student body president. He holds an M.B.A. from Eastern New Mexico University as well.

Congressman Luis Gutierrez has represented the Fourth District of Illinois since 1992. He currently serves on the Veterans Affairs Committee and the Financial Services Committee, where he is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. During his time in Congress, Congressman Gutierrez has focused his efforts on immigration issues, and he is Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Task Force on Immigration.

Prior to being elected to Congress, the Congressman worked as a teacher, social worker, community activist, and city official.

He was elected in 1986 as Alderman for Chicago's 26th Ward. Congressman Gutierrez graduated from Northeastern Illinois University.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time today. I know—I understand that a couple of you will have to be leaving early and so as a result of that, Congressman Pearce if you would give your opening statement. Without objection, your written statement will be a part of the record.

We have 5-minute lights, as you are all aware, sitting generally on this side of the dais, and if you could stick to those as nearly as possible, I'd appreciate it.

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE STEVAN PEARCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Mr. PEARCE. Thank you, Chairman Hostettler and Ranking Member Jackson Lee.

I really feel the need to convey this idea that Jackson Lee suggested that we walk gingerly in this area. I represent a border district, 47 percent Hispanic, that recognizes the need for immigration. But we also have to recognize that immigration discussions must be broken into two halves—legal immigration and illegal immigration.

The legal immigration we all know creates vitality, vibrancy, and brings us new ideas and new entrepreneurships.

In August, I conducted 18 town hall meetings in my district on immigration. Where possible, I allowed the Hispano Chambers to moderate those discussions, to host the discussions, and we had very productive talks about what must be done.

There is great consensus among all cultures that we should increase border security, but we also need to recognize that coming across to better one's life should not be a crime.

Mr. Chairman, the entire U.S. border with Mexico in the State of New Mexico is in my congressional district. It's about 180 miles long. There are three counties providing almost 10,000 square miles for circumventing Border Patrol authorities, with 80 agents per shift. There's only one agent per 25 square miles in my district.

To compound the problem, we had the Border Patrol reissue and reassign agents away from our district into Arizona and California, and it has caused then a funneling of activity to the southern border of New Mexico, with increases in detentions growing from 61,000 to over 76,000.

The graphic that is up on slide two, if we get that up, shows the yellow school bus right there, which routinely brings people right to the border and then drops them off for staging to cross the border at night. We took the Homeland Security Department Committee to see this section of the border, and we watched that bus in operation bringing people in to deliver them for the illegal crossings.

The Border Patrol has a lack of necessary surveillance capabilities, but unfortunately they also squandered, the Border Patrol has

squandered apparently $239 million designated for the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System, the ISIS system.

The problem is four-fold. Basically, we have a problem with constituents. One of my constituents living in a border area recently was quoted, before you didn't call and report illegal immigrants on a property. You simply made them a sandwich, gave them a jug of water, and sent them on their way. But you did not fear for you life.

Now, when they knock, you don't dare answer the door. The residents who live right on the border, in the area of that yellow bus, they have built their own fences. There's the one barricade—if we move back one slide—there's the one barricade, but then that won't stop the cattle and so our ranchers have built their own barbed wire fences on Government easement property and still they—the properties have—or the people on the other side of the border have stolen that fence. It's impossible for the ranchers to rebuild. The Border Patrol simply says you should stay away from your fence; that it's that dangerous, and, yet, they're then faced with losing their livestock.

The impact on law enforcement officers is the second thing. Many times our local law enforcement officers have supplemented Border Patrol agencies, but I will tell you that many of our departments are two and three people, and Border Patrol has their expressed desire of driving the illegals away from the major thoroughfares onto the country roads and to be interdicted in rural areas, and that is putting an extreme strain on our particular sheriff's departments and police departments.

The criminal activity that is being conducted by the illegal immigrants is also straining to capacity our ability to respond. The detention costs are left to the local providers. Fifty dollars per day. One county applied last year for over $60,000 in alien assistance program funding. Drug smuggling counter intelligence is so sophisticated the stakes have become so high for smugglers that they find out who the sheriffs are and who the deputies are, and they tell them simply if you get in our way, we're going to kill you first, and then we're going to kill your families. So we've had young people who are in the law enforcement business in this area who've packed up and left, and they've gone somewhere else to be in law enforcement.

The—another impact that we face in the district is the extraordinary cost of Federal mandates to provide emergency care to illegal immigrants. Each year, thousands of immigrants require care for heat exhaustion and for the different problems that they've experienced, so we find those to be severely impacting us. Crushing caseloads for our judgeships. Three hundred and sixty-six cases per judgeship is what we experienced in our district; 89 is the national average.

We have an additional problem that affects us—the inability to search into—to look at the long stretches of the border.

Eventually, we must also, in addition to border security, Mr. Chairman, we must address the desire and reasons for people coming here. That tells us that we, at some point, are going to have to have a common sense guest worker program to deal with both the needs of workers, but also the reasons that people come here.

Our policies have been somewhat hypocritical, indicating that we need you to come and work, but we're going to make it as difficult for you to do so as possible.

And, Mr. Chairman, I also speak for a balanced comprehensive reform legislation, but also the need to reform immigration, where we have some commonsense guest worker program.

I thank the Chairman and yield back the balance of my time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pearce follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE STEVAN E. PEARCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Testimony of

Honorable Stevan E. Pearce
Member of Congress
New Mexico – Second Congressional District

Before the

HOUSE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION, BORDER SECURITY, AND CLAIMS

Oversight Hearing on

"How Illegal Immigration Impacts Constituencies: Perspectives from Members of Congress."

November 10, 2005

2:00 p.m.

Chairman Hostettler, Ranking Member Jackson-Lee and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the constituents of New Mexico's Second Congressional District. I commend the Subcommittee for recognizing the urgency of addressing the threats associated with our porous border.

First, I wish to clearly establish the magnitude of the problem in the border district I represent, followed by describing how illegal immigration is impacting four key areas of my constituency: residents, local law enforcement agencies, local hospitals, and the Federal court system. I will conclude by briefly offering my perspective on how Congress should address this urgent problem.

Magnitude of the illegal immigration problem in New Mexico

Mr. Chairman, the entire U.S. border with Mexico in the State of New Mexico is in my congressional district. It spans 180 miles of mostly open border. A pipe vehicular barrier, constructed by the New Mexico National Guard and illustrated in Graphic 1, extends for approximately 20 miles. Other small portions include barbed wire fences that private land owners have constructed to keep their cattle from crossing into Mexico. For the most part however, the border contains no barrier whatsoever.

Three counties—Hidalgo, Luna and Doña Ana—lie directly on the U.S.–Mexico border, providing 10,000 square miles for circumventing Border Patrol authorities. With approximately 80 agents per shift patrolling this area, there is only 1 agent per every 125 square miles.

This expansive border area has become the conduit of choice for illegal activity over the past two years, due to what I believe is a part of the Border Patrol's flawed national strategy of increasing attention on some areas of the border while failing to recognize the shifting traffic patterns to other areas. In 2004, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) launched the $10 million Arizona Border Control Initiative (ABCI) deploying 260 temporary and permanent Border Patrol agents, unmanned aerial vehicles, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Air and Marine aircraft and helicopters to Arizona without extending similar enforcement augmentation to New Mexico. Consequently, assigning additional resources along the Arizona border resulted in increasing illegal immigration into New Mexico. In 2004, the number of apprehensions in the New Mexico portion of the El Paso sector increased from 48,584 to 61,516, or 27%. Comparatively, in the year prior to implementation of ABCI, apprehensions in New Mexico had actually dropped from 55,960 to 48,584.

Notwithstanding this shift in illegal activity into New Mexico, CBP again augmented the ABCI with a Phase II, immediately providing an additional 355 permanent and temporary Border Patrol agents and 23 additional Border Patrol aircraft. As a result, illegal immigrant apprehension numbers in New Mexico continued to grow, increasing from 61, 516 to 76,847, or 25%.

More startling, however, is the number of illegal immigrants apprehended in my district who are from designated "special interest" countries. In the past two years, 2 have been from Afghanistan, 2 from Indonesia, 9 from Iran, and 1 from Syria.

These numbers are only actual Border Patrol apprehensions. My constituents report to me daily the extraordinary numbers of illegal immigrants crossing their property—some up to 500 per day just on one ranch—that the Border Patrol never intercepts.

To illustrate the massive flows of illegal immigrants crossing at just one area in my district, I would like to point out the yellow school bus in Graphic 2. This yellow school bus, with dark tinted windows, is just one of many constant busloads carrying soon-to-be illegal immigrants to staging areas along the border each the day. Throughout the day, these illegal immigrants make their way from the staging areas across the unimpeded border into New Mexico. Just to highlight the lack of deterrence, this bus drove by just after the House Homeland Security Committee had been standing at the border with a contingent of Border Patrol agents—literally, just minutes after.

Adding to the problem is the lack of necessary surveillance capabilities to detect illegal activity and maximize the limited number of Border Patrol agents through targeted intervention. Unfortunately, the $239 million Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System (ISIS) intended to blanket the border with cameras and sensors was squandered, leaving many of the areas along the border in my district undetectable with broken or uninstalled cameras and sensors.

Impact of Problem on the Constituency

Impact on residents

One of my constituents living in the border area recently was quoted, "Before, you didn't call and report illegal immigrants on your property. You'd fix them some sandwiches and give them a jug of water and send them on their way…but you didn't fear for your life. Now, when they knock you don't dare answer the door."

The extent and intensity with which illegal immigration is increasing in my district is placing extraordinary costs and danger on residents in this border area.

Vandalism and burglary of residents' homes and property are increasing dramatically. Two weeks ago, a constituent informed me that illegal immigrants broke into three houses in Hidalgo County the day before. The photograph in Graphic 3 shows the busted door. One of my constituents has been burglarized by illegal immigrants three times in the past two years. The illegal immigrants take food from the refrigerators and clothes from closets. Constituents often inform me that their trucks, cars and tractors are stolen and used to escape from Border Patrol. In August, I was informed that human smugglers stole a school bus from the school bus facility in Lordsburg.

It is not only private residences that have been burglarized, but businesses in the communities close to the border. Due to the lack of detention bed space, the Border Patrol stations in my district have been forced to release apprehended illegal immigrants into our communities, such as the parking lots of the local McDonalds and Wal–Mart. Shortly after, the police departments receive calls that the Family Dollar Store and other businesses in the community have been burglarized.

Many of the residents live on ranches on the U.S.–Mexico border, where there is no fence or barrier. These ranchers have built their own barbed wire fences to keep their cattle from entering Mexico. However, the fences are routinely destroyed, often by human and drug smugglers driving directly over the fences. Earlier this year, a 1.1 mile section of a rancher's border fence was stolen, leaving the border wide open for his cattle to be lost completely.

Despite the fact that the fence is on a 60 ft. government right away that runs along the border, the Federal government will not reimburse the ranchers for the destruction of the fence. The ranchers rebuilt the 1.1 mile fence at their own cost of $5,000. Yet, the fence is continually broken, costing the ranchers $250 per day to maintain it. Other ranchers inform me that the solar windmills that power water generation for their cattle are constantly damaged costing $800 per windmill to repair.

Furthermore, residents are faced with the daily task of cleaning up the massive amounts of debris left behind by the illegal immigrants, including clothes, food, trash, syringes, human feces—enough to fill several tractor trailers full in the words of one of my constituents.

Bandit activity is the latest disturbingly growing trend threatening the lives of residents along the border. The human smugglers are partnering with Mexican bandits, who are robbing the illegal immigrants as the smugglers bring them across the border. Competing bandits are beginning to fight over the groups of smuggled immigrants even on the U.S. side. One of the ranchers and her daughter—while checking their border fence for damage on horseback—recently rode upon a bandit shoot out. Thankfully, they were not injured, this time.

The bandit activity has become so prevalent that the Border Patrol has even warned residents not to go near their own border fences. It is patently offensive when the government agency responsible for protecting the residents warns them not to go repair their own border fence— a fence the Federal government refuses to maintain—because the Border Patrol cannot effectively gain control of the border.

Impact on local law enforcement agencies

Due to the expansive nature of my district's border area, and limited border security resources, local law enforcement agencies have long supplemented the Border Patrol in responding to and apprehending unlawful entries and illegal immigrants committing criminal offenses. However, the extent and intensity with which illegal activity is increasing is extracting a costly and dangerous toll on local law enforcement agencies not only in border communities, but communities throughout the district.

Police and sheriff departments are increasingly called on a daily basis to respond to large groups of illegal immigrants hiding in fields or to intercept car and truck loads of illegal immigrants on behalf of the Border Patrol. The groups have become so large that it is taking an entire shift of officers to respond to, chase and apprehend the illegal immigrants and wait for Border Patrol officers to return from patrolling other areas of the border in order to process the illegal immigrants.

It costs the Luna County Sheriff's Department up to $800 each time they respond to such instances. Law enforcement agencies in border communities across the district tell me it requires 25% of their operating budgets to supplement the Border Patrol in this manner.

Another component straining local law enforcement agencies is responding to criminal activity by illegal immigrants. The Luna County Sheriff's Department indicates that criminal offenses by illegal immigrants—including hit and runs, stolen vehicles and domestic violence and drug seizures—have grown to 150 since the beginning of the year alone. The Chief of Police Clare May in Columbus, New Mexico, a village that sits directly on the border, stated that stolen cars have increased from 5 cars a year in 2003 to almost 20 cars just in one month last year.

Routinely, the local law enforcement agencies must intercept the stolen vehicles while full of illegal immigrants, which often result in high speed chases through our small border communities. Several of the high speed pursuits have resulted in rollovers

and deaths of the smuggler and the illegal immigrants inside. However, most result in arrests, with discovery of large amounts of marijuana or cocaine.

These criminal cases place a massive burden on the local departments particularly because the officers must process the criminals and detain them until they can appear before a judge. Most offensive is the mandate that local law enforcement departments must contact the Mexican consulate and wait for the Mexican government's action to ensure proper representation for the criminals, prolonging the time in which the local departments have had to detain the criminal aliens.

Jails in the border area will typically detain the criminal aliens for up to 6 months at a cost of approximately $50 per day per inmate. Much of this in not reimbursed. Last year, one county applied for $60,000 in State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) funding and received $4,800.

While such responses are indeed imposing a burdensome financial cost on the departments, it is severely compromising the safety of residents when officers are pulled away from their normal duties in communities and counties.

Local law enforcement agencies are not only impacted by the extent to which illegal activity has increased, but also the growing intensity of the dangerous activity. The drug and human smugglers' counter intelligence is so sophisticated, and the stakes have become so high for the smugglers, that they are threatening the lives of local law enforcement officers. In early August 2005, the Columbus Police Chief barely escaped a sniper's two gunfire shots while investigating two abandoned cars. Also, Sheriff Deputies have been approached by human and drug smugglers and told the smugglers know who their families are and where they live and they will be killed if the officers get in their way.

Unfortunately, contributing to this burden on local law enforcement agencies is the flawed checkpoint system used by Border Patrol. There are five permanent checkpoints with two on major US Interstates 10 & 25 and others on major NM State Highways, as illustrated in Graphic 4. The problem is that illegal activity is increasing most on the west side of the state where only one permanent checkpoint exists on Interstate 10.

The Border Patrol Headquarters will proudly tell you that the purpose of the permanent checkpoints is to redirect the illegal activity onto rural roads where illegal activity is more visible. I do not know if you have ever been to southern New Mexico, but you can drive for hours on these rural roads and never see a single car. Moreover, the law enforcement agencies that are patrolling the rural roads only have about 3-4 officers on duty per shift who are responsible for counties the size of most states. Without augmenting the number of Border Patrol permanent checkpoints on these rural roads throughout the border areas, the already–stretched local law enforcement agencies are forced to apprehend and detain an increasingly larger amount of illegal immigrant and dangerous drug smuggler traffic.

Mr. Chairman, the police departments along the border in my district are small, they have small budgets, and their officers work with neither healthcare nor retirement. With it taking 25% of their operating budget, these departments cannot withstand the pressures illegal immigration is putting on their forces. Moreover, supplementing the work of the Border Patrol is compromising local law enforcement departments' primary duty of protecting the citizens of their communities.

Impact on local hospitals

The extraordinary costs of the Federal mandate to provide emergency care to illegal immigrants is pushing my district's local hospitals' resources beyond their capacity to cope.

Each year, thousands of illegal immigrants require emergency care for heat exhaustion or other severe injuries as they enter New Mexico. Human smugglers leave many of these individuals behind, while others have simply come to the port of entry either sick or in labor.

Mimbres Memorial Hospital in Deming, New Mexico reports that a one quarter of all patients treated last year were illegal immigrants. Providing emergency care to illegal immigrants costs the hospital at least $400,000 per month. This does not include the cost to transport the illegal immigrants via helicopter to larger city hospitals, such as El Paso.

These rising costs are making it extremely difficult for hospitals to continue operating in my district. When it already takes residents up to an hour to get to the nearest hospital, we cannot afford another hospital leaving our area.

Impact on the Federal Court

Rising levels of illegal immigration continues to break the back of the Federal judiciary in my district as well. Even as we become more successful at securing the border through additional Border Patrol staff and technology, the caseload will continue to burden the United States District Court of New Mexico, specifically the Las Cruces federal courthouse.

Crushing caseloads, unique geographical factors and the exhaustion of judicial resources manifest a desperate judicial situation. The 2005 Judicial Conference Biennial Judgeship Survey presented its recommendations for additional judgeships to Congress. Data from the Conference indicates the District has one of the highest total criminal caseload per judgeship in the nation. Criminal filings per judgeship in the District are the highest in the nation at 366 per judgeship. The national average is 89.

The exceptional caseload is primarily attributed to the geographical factors unique to the District and other border Districts. Immigration and narcotics cases are almost exclusively driving the increase—placing an extraordinary burden on the Las Cruces federal courthouse, which is just 50 miles away from the U.S.–Mexico border. In fact,

two–thirds of all criminal cases in the District are now processed in Las Cruces. Immigration prosecutions currently account for 85 percent of all criminal cases in the District. Additionally, the amount of time in which these cases are adjudicated is increasing simultaneously with the caseload as the immigration cases predominantly require interpretation.

Due to the already high strain on judges in the Albuquerque and Santa Fe courts, the District has been unable to assign a permanent District Judge in Las Cruces. However, the court's need for additional judgeships in Las Cruces is not indicative of a lack of willingness on behalf the District Judges to actively address the increased caseload. While the District has made valiant efforts, it has begun to exhaust all judicial resources. One option employed to handle the enormous caseload in Las Cruces is assigning rotating duties to District Judges from Albuquerque and Santa Fe. This means judges and their staffs must travel more than 450 miles round trip during the week, face extraordinary caseloads and return to their Chambers on the weekends to compensate for the time lost to duty in Las Cruces. Constant long travel and unusually long hours on cases are obviously wearing on the judges who must perform this duty.

The District also utilizes Magistrate Judges in Las Cruces to manage the crushing caseload. While Magistrate Judges cannot hear felony trials or sentence defendants convicted of felony-level crimes, just handling pre–indictment pleas for the District requires them to be on the bench everyday and every weekend of the year.

Many of the judges relied upon to handle the Las Cruces caseload are 10th Circuit Court of Appeals Judges or District Judges from other jurisdictions in the United States. U.S. District Judge William Sessions, assisting from Burlington, VT, spent two weeks in Las Cruces during February 2003 and concluded that Las Cruces is in desperate need of more than one full-time Article III judgeship. Within only two days, Judge Sessions sentenced more than 50 people. Judge Sessions has never seen a caseload as high as Las Cruces' in the eight years he has been on the bench. In fact, he handled more cases in one month in Las Cruces than he handled in one year in Vermont.

U.S. District Judge Monti Belot, who has assisted in Las Cruces from Wichita, Kansas on three different occasions as late as April 2003, states there is no question there is a need for additional Article III judgeships in Las Cruces. Judge Belot contends there is no way to appreciate the volume of work and how well the Clerk's Office, U.S. Marshals, Public Defenders and U.S. Attorneys work together to handle the crushing caseload unless one actually sees it for themselves.

The Conference has recommended one permanent judgeships and one temporary judgeship for the District, despite the fact that caseload level supports two permanent judgeships. The Conference contends the temporary judgeship will bring the District to parity with other Districts. However, the temporary judgeship previously created in the 21st Century Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act failed to reduce the District's caseload to the level the Judicial Conference anticipated.

I believe the current situation in the District illustrates the desperate need to include the 2 permanent judgeships for the District in legislation the Judiciary Committee approves.

Suggestions for addressing the urgent problem

Mr. Chairman, we do not have much more time to secure our border. Frankly, it is not a matter of if, but when, one of my constituents is severely injured or killed due to the unimpeded illegal activity led by dangerous human and drug smugglers. If that happens, it will bring any opportunity for a rational discussion on border security and immigration reform to a grinding halt. Unlike Hurricane Katrina, there will be no blame game among the Federal, State or Local level—the responsibility lies solely on the Federal government and this Congress.

Congress must demonstrate a relentless commitment to securing our borders. We must commit the Federal resources needed to effectively detect, apprehend and return illegal immigrants—including boots on the ground, technology and the judicial resources. We must commit to the detention bed space needed to end the offensive policy of "catch and release" that only incentivizes illegal immigration. We must also begin to hold the nations from which these illegal immigrants arrive accountable for failure to cooperate with the United States.

Mr. Chairman, in all reality, any border security efforts will be in vain if we fail to simultaneously address the *reasons* contributing to the flow of illegal immigration into this country. The majority of the illegal immigrants coming here simply want to work. Businesses along the border and elsewhere rely on this labor. Yet there is no effective legal channel for these immigrants to come here to work. Our policies have become even hypocritical—indicating that "we need you to come over and work, but we are going to make it difficult and even deadly for you to do so."

As long as our immigration policies make it difficult to come here to work temporarily on a legal basis, those on both sides—workers and employers—will fill the need illegally. The consequence is a huge flow of illegal immigration to which we must respond, often subtracting from the capability to focus on drug smuggling and terrorists.

Congress must come to an agreement on a comprehensive immigration law reform that provides for the legal opportunities for these individuals to come to the United States, sign our guest book, work and return to their families and homeland.

ATTACHMENT

Graphic 1

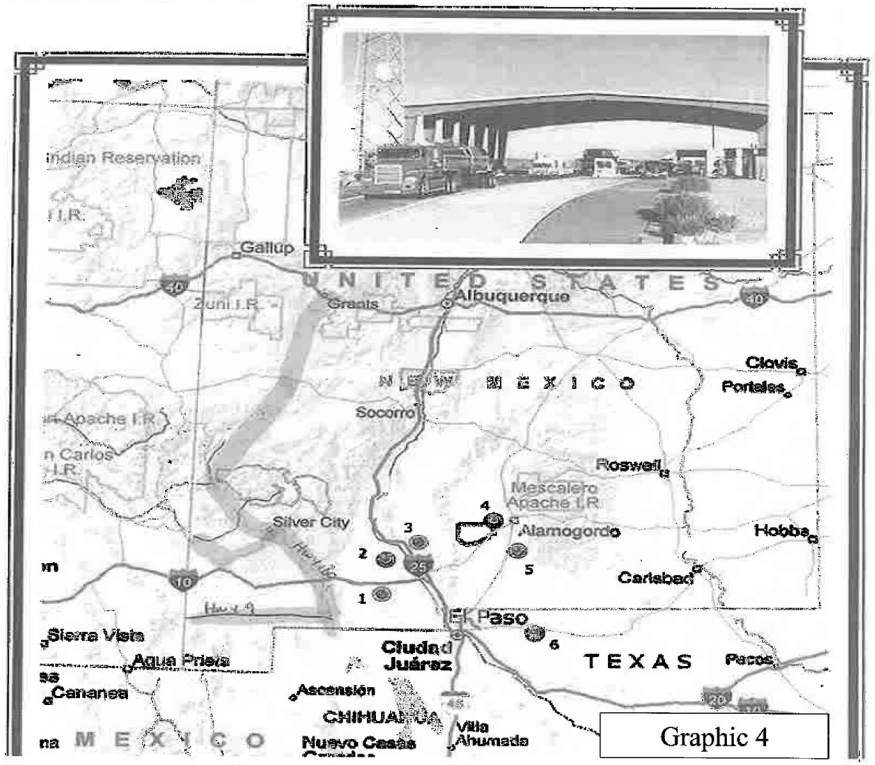
Graphic 2

Graphic 3

CHECKPOINTS

Checkpoints

1 = I–10
2 = HWY 185
3 = I–25
4 = 70/82
5 = HWY 54
6 = 62/180



Graphic 4

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Thank you, Congressman Pearce.

Congressman Bonilla?

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE HENRY BONILLA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. BONILLA. Thank you, Chairman. As you pointed out in your introduction, Chairman, no Member of Congress represents a longer portion of the Mexican border than I do.

It spans over 700 miles, and, Chairman, there is an invasion going on as we speak of OTMs, which is the primary concern that we have now. As you know, the Border Patrol categorizes other than Mexicans, OTMs, in a different category as they do Mexican illegals that come across the border. And while the Mexican illegal immigrant is a separate issue, and one that's been with us for a long time, the new invasion, of OTMs, is something that every American needs to be alarmed about.

So far this year, almost 150,000 OTMs have come across the Southwest border. They come from the Mideast. They come from Asia. They come from South and Central America, which is where a lot of the gang problems are rooted now in our country. And in many cases, Mr. Chairman, the culture is such now because of the catch and release program that the Department of Homeland Security has undertaken where they come across the border, and they're given court papers, and it's a joke. They're asked to appear, and everyone has documented now that between 85 and 90 percent never show up in court; and they use that as a free ticket to go into whatever city they need to go.

And the culture now is pathetic, Mr. Chairman, with the fact that these OTMs, now the cultural message out there is that they come across the border looking for the Border Patrol agents. They don't even run from them anymore. We have this documented on photographs. In the last several months, we have actually had people out there with cameras, where they come across the Rio Grande, and they look for the Border Patrol; throw their hands up, knowing full well they're going to get a meal. They're going to get a place to sleep. They're going to get medical care. They're going to get asked a couple of questions. In many cases, they do not have the manpower to debrief any of these people, and then they set them free with court papers, claiming that they don't have the detention space.

Now, there are lot of issues involved that present a danger to communities, and again let me also emphasize that that this is not an Hispanic issue or an Anglo issue or a Republican or Democrat issue. My colleague, Mr. Culberson, for example, who was just here a moment ago, has had many one-on-one conversations with border sheriffs, many of which are Members of the other party. They are members of the Latino ethnic groups, county commissioners and mayors. My mayor of Eagle Pass, for example, is right on the border, which is a 95 percent plus Hispanic community, they're outraged at what our country is now allowing in terms of the OTM invasion in this country. And it's embarrassing as a federally elected representative to go down there and ride in a car with my sheriff in a border county or the mayor of a border town that look at us and say, "why is our policy now allowing this to happen, and

you're watching the OTMs walking down the street? And they're headed who knows where?"

That's why this is not just an issue for those of us right on the border, it's an issue for Americans who live in New York and Colorado and California, because they've seen this incredible influx of OTMs now with the catch and release program.

I've told every word of this to Secretary Chertoff on a couple of occasions, one in an official hearing in another Committee just a couple of weeks ago, and I asked him point blank: "If I'm not mistaken, Congressman Sylvestre Reyes, who used to be a Border Patrol chief in El Paso once used tents to properly shut down the border in that community of El Paso. And he was a hero when he did that."

And again, my—our understanding is that he used temporary tents to humanely house illegals that were coming across the border, and it had an incredible impact not just on the influx of illegals at the time, but it also did several other things that helped the morale of the Border Patrol. It also—the cultural word on the street started to reverse itself, and the illegal immigration rate dramatically dropped, and it just worked all the way around.

And I'm suggesting to Secretary Chertoff and I'm suggesting to any Member of Congress who has any say in this that we need to look at temporarily housing OTMs in tents, humanely.

We're not talking about treating anybody inhumanely. But and quite frankly, if they had to spend some time in these tents, it would be probably better, a better facility than they would have slept in for the weeks on end that they spent coming across those dangerous mountainous and desert terrains that they had to traverse.

So we're talking about doing this the right way, and also forcing, using the State Department, to try to force some of these countries who are not cooperative. You know a lot of people in this country talk about how we're not sensitive enough to illegal aliens.

You know how inhumane and how much the Mexican Government tries to shut down illegal immigration on its southern border. It's an embarrassment. And then sometimes for these consuls to come across the border and say, hey, you're not doing enough to pander to illegal aliens. It is an absolute outrage.

So anyone who researches the immigration policy of Mexico, for example—how do you think they're getting in here in the first place? They're coming from their southern border and coming up through our border. And they put absolutely no priority into stopping the flow of illegal aliens or in trying to help us get them back to their original countries where they come from.

So, again, it's a complicated issue, and if we're able to do something to provide more detention beds, detention space, and more beds to house these OTMs, then we're going to have to talk about the legal system because that's overly taxed right now as well. And so we're going to be able to process them. So we're trying to be creative in looking at ways to do this.

And as I have said in letters to the President, in letters to former Secretary Ridge, to people like that, if this was the—if the OTMs were being released in your neighborhood, you'd be doing something about it now. If they were walking through your neighbor-

hood, you don't know what they're up to. The background checks are shallow at best, and to watch them come through, I just don't know how to put it more clearly, Mr. Chairman. It is an absolute outrage.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bonilla follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE HENRY BONILLA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

I represent more than 700 miles of the Texas/Mexico border. A few years ago the only people worried about border security were those living on the border. Times have changed. If you live in America and you're not worried about border security, you should be.

It takes only one terrorist to slip into our country and increase the risk of a terrorist catastrophe. The threat is real. Hundreds of illegal aliens invade our border communities each day. Recent intelligence gives frightening insight into terrorist plans on the U.S./Mexico border. The Washington Post reported this month that Abu Ali, a man indicted in a plot to assassinate President George W. Bush, admitted his plan to bring members of an al Qaeda cell into the U.S. through Mexico. Just this spring U.S. officials revealed that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, mastermind of several Iraq terrorist attacks, may be planning U.S. attacks and entering through the southern border. As long as our nation's borders are porous, we have an increased chance of terrorism on our own soil. Known terrorists, ruthless members of drug cartels and free loaders from around the world now use the southwest border as a revolving door.

While many crossing the border are seeking work and a new life, many are also bringing violent crime and drugs into these small towns that are ill equipped to deal with the problem. Analysis of the latest Census data indicates **Texas' illegal immigrant population is costing the state's taxpayers more than $4.7 billion per year** for education, medical care and incarceration. Even if the estimated tax contributions of illegal immigrant workers are subtracted, net outlays still amount to more than $3.7 billion per year.

- Approximately 11.9% of children in the Texas public school system are illegal aliens.
- Texan taxpayers pay approximately $520 million a year for health care of illegal aliens.
- Finally, the uncompensated cost of incarcerating illegal aliens in Texas state and county prisons amounts to about $150 million a year. This figure does not include local jail detention costs, related law enforcement and judicial expenditures, nor the monetary costs of the crimes that led to their incarceration in the first place.

The problem is very immediate and personal to border communities. My proximity to the border gives me a first-hand appreciation of the problem. My border communities are small and rely on cross border commerce. Some of my constituents have family and friends on both sides of the border. Efficient LEGAL border crossings are essential to this region, but illegal border crossing have become an excessive burden.

As of last month, an estimated 146,000 Non-Mexican Illegal Aliens (NMIAs) illegally crossed the US-Mexico border so far this year. Gangs and drug traffickers can easily overwhelm small, local law enforcement departments. Increased crime rates require the diversion of limited local funds from other important local needs impacting these communities economically and overburdening other social services. Imagine if this was happening in your town. You might feel under siege.

I recognize there is no quick-fix. The issue must be addressed from several angles. That's exactly what I have been championing for years, and is the basis for a series of legislative initiatives that I been rolling out over the summer and this fall.

The first step toward a safer, more secure border is basic preparedness. You can't secure a border without man-power, equipment and facilities. We've made great advances in this arena. Over the last year our Congress has added 1500 Border Patrol agents and 568 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to the force. We've also funded $61 million for border security technology, including surveillance and unmanned aerial vehicles. I can't deny that these are fantastic advances, but we cannot stop here.

One of the border's largest pitfalls has been the amount of detention bed space. Border Patrol agents are doing their job by capturing illegal immigrants. But once

captured they are almost immediately set free because there is not room for detention. Additional bed space allows our immigration system to do its job by keeping illegal immigrants behind bars and holding them until they can be properly deported. A major accomplishment occurred this past year when Congress funded 3870 detention beds for the U.S./Mexico border. This is a tremendous step toward filling a gaping hole in our system.

However, 3,870 new detention beds will not fix the problem, and we need help now. Until your expedited removal program is fully implemented, DHS could erect temporary detention facilities using tents, and stop releasing illegal NIMAs immediately. This is not an untested idea either. Tents were used for temporary detention facilities in the mid-1980's in Southern Texas (McAllen Sector) and it was a huge success. Three things happened as soon as the tents went up.

1) The **morale** of the Border Patrol officers improved.
2) Assurance of detention had a dramatic **deterrent effect** and attempted illegal border crossings went way down.
3) There was a resulting back-up of NIMAs on the Mexican side of the border which caused the government of **Mexico to take action** to reduce the number of NIMAs that they allowed into their country. The bottom line is that the number of illegal NIMAs reduced so much that the temporary detention facilities could be removed in just over a year.

Once the enforcement infrastructure is in place, the next step is reducing the backlog of illegal immigrants awaiting trial. This will be accomplished by streamlining the justice system for adjudication and removal of the illegal immigrants. Part of my legislative package will include funding for additional immigration trial attorneys and judges. The shortage of attorneys and judges is appalling. By filling these slots and making more available we can expedite the adjudication process and eliminate a log jam that has existed for years.

The final phase of my border security proposal is to facilitate the deportation of illegal immigrants. Secretary Chertoff has pledged to implement an expedited removal program in all Border Patrol sectors. Expedited removal would allow the vast majority of illegal immigrants to be repatriated within days, rather than months and reduce judicial back-log. Although an expedited removal system was authorized last year, only three Border Patrol sectors have been approved by DHS to use the program so far. This simply is not enough. The Department of Homeland Security must make it a priority to implement an expedited removal program in every sector. Additionally, Secretary Chertoff recently wrote me a letter expressing concern over what he calls, "an overstuffed removal pipeline." Delays in country clearances and related repatriation issues must be fixed to ensure the success of the expedited removal programs.

The bottom line is that we live in an age where a porous border is a danger not only to border states, but to our entire nation. Every day that our border security is ignored, gangs, criminals and terrorists are finding new ways to exploit the weaknesses of our security systems. Terrorists are no longer playing by the same rules and neither should we.

Ignoring this problem is like ignoring the war against terrorism. Those of us who live near the border cannot fight this war on our own. We must stand together as a nation to regain control of our border.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Thank you, Congressman Bonilla.

Congressman Gutierrez.

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE LUIS GUTIERREZ, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Good afternoon, Chairman Hostettler and Ranking Member Jackson Lee and Members of the Committee. It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon.

I hope to use my time to try to debunk some of the myths and misinformation about the issue of our broken immigration system.

I'll start with the following quote: "Foreign immigration, which, in the past has added so much to the wealth, development of resources, and increase of power to the Nation, as the asylum of the oppressed of all nations should be fostered and encouraged by a liberal and just policy."

I couldn't agree more. Where did I read that? Was it in some policy papers produced by some progressive think tank? No.

Was it in the editorial pages of a liberal leaning newspaper? No.

Actually, those eloquent and forward looking words were the Republican platform of 1864, and I think we would be wise to pay close attention to that vision.

While much has changed, the fundamental point of that statement rings true today. But if you want a more modern quote on the subject, Grover Norquist said just yesterday: "Immigration bashing is not a vote winner."

Look, I'm the first to agree that the immigration system in this nation is badly broken, but how did we get there? Is the answer that we deport 8 to 11 million undocumented individuals who are working and contributing to their communities? How much would that cost?

According to a recent study for the Center for American Progress, it would cost more than $41 billion a year, and would exceed the entire budget of the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2006 to begin to deport 10 to 12 million people.

But don't trust my numbers or the numbers of that institution. Secretary Chertoff recently testified to the Senate Judiciary Committee that it would cost "billions and billions and billions," adding that it would not be a feasible idea.

More importantly, what would happen to our workforce and to our economy? In the factories of Chicago, immigrants today make up more than one out of every four workers. And without their labor, these factories might need to move elsewhere to find available workers, even overseas.

And similar trends across our country's industries exist.

Mexican immigrants today fill almost half of the blue collar, service-related and unskilled jobs in my city. It is not an exaggeration to say that our cities would grind to a halt without these workers.

In fact, the Department of Labor, our own Department of Labor, President Bush's Department of Labor, estimates that the total number of jobs requiring short-term training will increase from 53 million in 2000 to 60 million in 2010, a net increase of 7.7 million jobs—low-skilled, very little training, low paying jobs. We're going to create 7.7 million.

And the fact is Americans are simply unwilling to do these jobs. I don't blame them. Who would want these arduous, back breaking, dead end, low-paying jobs? I think President Reagan probably summed the issue up best when he described apples rotting on a tree.

President Reagan said: "It makes one wonder about the illegal alien fuss. Are great numbers of our unemployed really victims of the illegal alien invasion, or are those illegal tourists actually working, doing work that our own people won't do? One thing is certain in this hungry world. No regulation or law should be allowed if it results in crops rotting in our country, in our fields, for lack of harvesters."

And that's President Reagan, describing rotting apples on a tree.

It is probably important to note today that more than 80 percent of the apple pickers in Washington State are immigrants, and half

of them, according to our Justice and Labor Departments, are illegally in the United States.

Look at other industries, and you'll arrive at the same conclusion.

Today, there are more than 700,000 undocumented restaurant workers; more than 250,000 undocumented household employees, and one million undocumented farm workers.

So what should we do to ensure that we create an immigration policy that, as President Bush said, "match willing foreign workers with willing employers when no American can be found to fill the job." I think the answer is comprehensive immigration reform, because our current policies are simply not working.

A recent study by Princeton Professor Douglas Massey on the U.S. Border Patrol budget shows that its budget, the Border Patrol budget, has increased 10-fold since 1986. But as we all know, the number of illegal immigrants to the United States continues to increase.

So I think we need to do more than simply throw money at the problem. We need to look more comprehensively and more strategically about this issue, because building a giant fence or sending more unfunded mandates to our States will not solve this problem. And the hard reality is these policies will only drive millions of undocumented workers further into our nation's underground.

If we want to solve the challenges of immigrant health care and education, we need to bring these people out of the shadows so that they can be fully functioning and fully taxed members of our society, paying their fair share.

I believe the solution lies in the fact that we must stop targeting Windex-wielding cleaning ladies, and start focusing our limited resources on targeting real terrorists and criminals.

However, none of this will be successful unless we deal directly with the 8 to 11 million undocumented workers who are already here, living and working and contributing.

And let me be clear here. These people should be penalized, but the punishment should fit the crime. They should be fined. They should be fingerprinted, and they should be thoroughly vetted so that we can have a more secure America.

In terms of health care, a recent Harvard-Columbia University study showed that health care expenditures are substantially lower for immigrants than it is for U.S.-born persons. Just as undocumented workers—and I want to make this clear; these are not my—specifically, these are Social Security Department statistics. Just as undocumented workers help sustain our Social Security System with a subsidy of as much as $7 billion a year, these individuals are also helping to subsidize our nation's health care system through taxes they pay.

Since the late 1980's, more than $189 billion in wages ended up recorded in the Social Security Administration's earnings suspense file. This file has grown by more than $50 billion a year in the current decade, generating more than $6 to $7 billion in Social Security tax revenue and $1.5 billion in Medicare taxes.

In addition to these taxes, no storekeeper in Chicago has ever said, oh, you're undocumented. You don't have to pay a sales tax on your purchase. You don't have to pay gas tax, cigarette tax,

property tax. They pay each and every one of these taxes, and I think that we as a Congress would be wise to take these factors into consideration as we carefully consider proposals such as those of Representative Jackson Lee and the one I introduced with Representatives Kolbe, Flake, and Senators McCain and Kennedy.

And I would like to just wind up, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, by having to introduce to the record 153 editorials supporting comprehensive immigration reform, and the Secure America Orderly Immigration Act in 74 publications in 31 States.

The country is ready for comprehensive immigration reform.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement Mr. Gutierrez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LUIS V. GUTIERREZ, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Good afternoon, Chairman Hostettler and Ranking Member Jackson Lee, and members of the committee.

It is with great pleasure that I appear before this subcommittee today to share my views on how our immigrant community impacts the City of Chicago, where my Congressional District resides.

I hope to use my time to try to debunk some of the myths and misinformation about the issue of immigration and to explain why we desperately need to reform our broken immigration system.

I thought I'd start today by quoting something I recently read.

And I quote . . . "[F]oreign immigration, which in the past has added so much to the wealth, development of resources and increase of power to the nation, the asylum of the oppressed of all nations, should be fostered and encouraged by a liberal and just policy."

I could not agree more.

But where did I read that? Was it in the policy papers produced by some progressive think tank? No. Was it in the editorial pages of a liberal-leaning newspaper? No.

Actually, those eloquent and forward-looking words were from the Republican Party Platform in 1864 and I think we would be wise to pay close attention to those sentiments.

But if you want a more modern, timely quote on the subject, Grover Norquist said yesterday, "immigrant bashing is not a vote winner."

Look, I am the first to agree that our immigration system in this nation is badly broken and fixing it must be a top priority of Congress.

But how do we get there?

Is the answer that we deport the 8 to 11 million undocumented individuals in this nation who are working and contributing to their communities? What would a mass deportation even look like? How much would it cost?

According to a recent study by the Center for American Progress, it would cost more than 41 billion dollars a year—and would exceed the entire budget of the Department of Homeland Security for Fiscal Year 2006. And if you don't trust those numbers, Secretary Chertoff recently told the Senate Judiciary Committee that it would cost "billions and billions and billions," adding that it would not be a feasible idea.

And what if we were to spend these billions and billions of dollars, what would happen to our workforce and to our economy?

In the factories of Chicago, immigrants today make up more than one out of every four workers, and without their labor these factories might need to move elsewhere to find available workers.

And similar trends cut across various industries. Mexican immigrants today fill almost half of the blue-collar, service-related and unskilled jobs in our city. It is not an exaggeration to say that our city would grind to a halt without these workers.

In fact, the Labor Department estimates that the total number of jobs requiring only short-term training will increase from 53.2 million in 2000 to 60.9 million by 2010, a net increase of 7.7 million jobs.

And the fact is Americans are simply unwilling to do these jobs. I don't blame them. It is truly arduous labor. But these jobs need to get done to keep our economy growing and our communities thriving.

I think President Reagan probably summed this issue up best back in 1977, when he saw apples rotting on a tree because there were no local workers to pick them.

He said, "It makes one wonder about the illegal alien fuss. Are great numbers of our unemployed really victims of the illegal alien invasion or are those illegal tourists actually doing work our own people won't do? One thing is certain in this hungry world; no regulation or law should be allowed if it results in crops rotting in the fields for lack of harvesters."

It is probably important to note that today more than 80 percent of all apple pickers in Washington State are immigrant farm workers and over half of them are undocumented.

So what should we do to ensure that we create an immigration system that, as President Bush said, can "match willing foreign workers with willing employers when no Americans can be found to fill the job?"

I think the answer is comprehensive immigration reform.

I know there is a lot of talk about enforcement and border security provisions. And—don't get me wrong—it is extremely important, but it is only one part of the immigration equation.

A recent study by Princeton Professor Douglas Massey on the U.S. Border Patrol Budget shows that its budget has increased tenfold since 1986. And, as you know, this rapidly rising budget has done very little to stem the rapid rise in undocumented immigration.

So I think we need to do more than simply throw more money at the problem. We need to abandon the same old, tired, narrow and failed policies of the past. And we need to think more comprehensively and more strategically about the issue—because building a giant fence or sending more unfunded mandates to our states will not solve this problem. And the hard reality is that these policies would only drive millions of undocumented workers further into our nation's shadows. And all the challenges that my colleagues talk about—from health care costs to other factors—will remain if we have millions of people operating in the shadows.

I believe the solution lies in the fact that we must stop targeting Windex-wielding cleaning ladies and start focusing our limited resources on better targeting the real terrorists and criminals and smugglers who wish to do our nation harm.

And I think that goal is achievable if we combine smart enforcement with a sensible and pragmatic path for new workers to come to this country—in a legal, safe and humane way—to fill shortfalls in our workforce.

However, none of this will be successful unless we deal directly with the 8 to 11 million undocumented workers who are already here—living and working and contributing to a better, more dynamic America.

And let me be clear here: I believe that these people should be penalized. But the punishment should fit the crime. They should be fined and fingerprinted and thoroughly vetted. But they should not have their families destroyed for decades because they came here to support them. They should be allowed to be full and productive members of our society. So they can pay all their taxes and not have to rely on costly emergency medical care.

But just attacking them will not solve the problem—we need real solutions.

When I recently asked Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan about immigration, he stated:

"As I've said before, I'm always supportive of expanding our immigration policies. I think that immigration has been very important to the success of this country. And I fully support it."

And personally I think expanding our policies should be along the lines of President Reagan's views of immigrants to our country as people who "posses a determination that with hard work and freedom, they would live a better life and their children even more so."

Or President Bush who stated: "they're willing to walk across miles of desert to do work that some Americans won't do. And we've got to respect that, it seems like to me, and treat those people with respect."

So I think that it is important that we as a Congress and, in particular the work of this committee, focus on creating an immigration system that takes into account the important contributions immigration make—and will continue to make—if we encourage them to come out of the shadows.

I know many blame immigrants for all of our nation's ills, but the statistics I see and the people I meet in Chicago and across the nation reflect an entirely different perspective. And it seems to me that these individuals who scapegoat our immigrant community ignore the very obvious, documented and specific benefits of immigration to the U.S. economy and society.

In terms of health care, a recent Harvard/Columbia University study showed that health care expenditures are substantially lower for immigrants than for U.S.-born persons.

Similar to how undocumented workers help sustain our Social Security System with a subsidy of as much as $7 billion a year, these individuals are also helping to subsidize our nation's health care system through the taxes they pay.

Immigrants also pay billion of dollars a year in taxes. One study showed that the undocumented in New York pay more than one billion dollars a year in taxes. Whether that is sales tax, payroll tax, cigarette tax, they are making enormous contributions.

And they are helping ensure the flow of the most important type of capital—human capital—back into our cities.

According to Crain's Chicago Business, "Immigrants are moving into and bringing new life to many blue-collar areas of Chicago that had previously been losing population. These new residents contributed to the city's net gain in population during the 1990s."

And I think that we, as a Congress, would be wise to take these factors into account.

And that is why I believe it is so urgent for Congress to tackle the issue of comprehensive immigration reform. And why I think it is important to hard look at legislative proposals like Rep. Jackson Lee's and the one I introduced with Representatives Kolbe and Flake and Senators McCain and Kennedy.

Because each day that goes by with silence and inaction means the potential for another dead body turning up in the desert, another child separated from her parent, another worker exploited and another dream denied.

Thank you again, Chairman Hostettler and Ranking Member Jackson Lee, for giving me this great opportunity to be here today. I welcome any questions you and the other members may have.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Without objection, the gentleman's editorials will be—the material will be entered into the record.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Thank you very much, Mr. Hostettler.

[The information referred to is available in the Appendix.]

Mr. HOSTETTLER. At this time, I'd like to turn to the gentlelady from California for purposes of an opening statement.

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Thank you, Chairman Hostettler and Ranking Member Jackson Lee for conducting this oversight hearing.

Throughout American history, immigrants have helped build America's cities, towns, farms, businesses, economies, and civic and cultural institutions.

Now, I don't know about where everybody else lives, but I know first hand the benefits that immigrants contribute to my local community in the 39th Congressional District.

Immigrants are a vital part of my community, and by immigrants, I mean immigrants of every ethnic makeup. They are the very same people who take care of our children and the elderly, educate our youth, clean our hotel rooms, pick and cook the food that we eat. They revitalize blighted areas and are successful entrepreneurs who pay taxes.

If we deported every single immigrant in the country, I am told it would mean removing 12 to 15 million individuals. This is approximately the same as removing everybody from the States of Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and give or take all of Kentucky.

What do you suppose the economic and social implications would be of removing this many people? I frankly find the debate very disingenuous; that the very same people who oppose any realistic solution to the immigration problem are the same people who are

enjoying the benefits of immigrants and immigrant labor in this country.

People need to wake up, and people need to get real and drop the rhetoric.

This weekend, for example, I was walking around the Capitol grounds, and I saw immigrants washing the windows of a certain political party's office building. This is the same theme that I see every day in my district and all around Washington, D.C. repeated over and over and over again.

Now, just for the record, I want to get one thing straight here: I don't disagree with some of my colleagues who testified that our immigration system is broken and that we need to get a better grip on our borders. But while enhanced enforcement is an integral part of improving our nation's security, enforcement alone, without other reforms, simply will not achieve the control that the American people want and quite frankly deserve.

The past decade has taught us a hard lesson. The border build up doesn't stop the flow. It merely shifts it to more dangerous areas, where apprehensions are more difficult, and death is more likely.

So it's my hope that any immigration reform proposal that this Committee reviews is a comprehensive solution that doesn't just focus on trying to enforce our broken system.

And I might remind my colleague that in the Book of Matthew, Jesus tells us for whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me. And I would yield back.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I thank the gentlelady. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Smith, for the purposes of an opening statement.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

What I'd like to do is use my time to comment on some of the things that Congressman Gutierrez has just mentioned because I do think he, in his opening statement, touched a number of issues that do need to be addressed.

First of all, I'd like to thank him for quoting from the 1864 Republican Platform. That was when President Lincoln was renominated, and the quote, to mention it again, was, "Foreign immigration, which, in the past, has added so much to the wealth, development of resources, and increase of power to the Nation" and so forth.

And I just want to say I don't know that there's anyone who would disagree with that statement or with that platform today. And, in fact, as long as I've been in Congress, the Republican National Platform has included words that are very similar to that.

But, of course, we make a distinction between legal immigration and illegal immigration. And we recognize that our country is great today because of the contributions of legal immigrants, who have been coming for generations. And we know that we would not have the inventions. We would not have the strong economy that we're enjoying today, and many of the other benefits that we taken for granted, were it not for generations of immigrants in the past.

But there is a distinction between those who come to our country legally and play by the rules and come in the right way and indi-

viduals who cut to the front of the line, who disregard the rules and laws, and who come in the wrong way.

And that is a distinction we ought not to forget. I want to mention that the we had a law that we passed overwhelmingly in Congress back in 1996 that included an entry-exit system, which I think is the key to any reasonable determination of who's in the country legally and illegally. And what this entry-exit system simply did was to say we're going to find out who's coming into the country, why they're coming into the country, how long they're going to stay if they're coming temporarily, and whether they leave the country or not.

You simply have to know that if you're going to protect our homeland security.

And unfortunately, a lot of people coming into the country illegally are coming in for the wrong reason, and one absolutely astounding figure that demonstrates that is the fact that now today over 20 percent of all Federal prisoners are illegal immigrants—over 20 percent of all Federal prisoners are illegal immigrants.

Clearly, not everyone is coming into the country for the right reasons.

Furthermore, I think most of us also know that at least 40 percent of the millions who are in the country illegally actually came in on short-term tourist visas or business visas and overstayed those visas, and then simply failed to return home.

So it wasn't a situation where individuals came into the country illegally. They came into the country and then overstayed their visas, which puts them in illegal status, and, of course, makes them violators of our immigration laws.

But those are the individuals who, along with those who blatantly cross our borders illegally, we ought to be able to determine who they are and encourage them or help them return to their home countries if necessary.

A couple of other issues that were mentioned, and I've heard it at least twice today, is that the only thing that those of us who believe in border security failure is the immediate deportation of 8 to 11 or more million illegal immigrants. I don't know of a single Member of Congress who today would deport the 10 or 20 million illegal immigrants who are in the country today en masse, which is the implication of what we've heard.

What we do think ought to be done is to enforce our current immigration laws. If we were to do just that alone, there would be enough disincentive for people that come to the country illegally, and there would be enough incentive for those who are already here illegally to return home to dramatically reduce the number of illegal immigrants who are in the country.

So the other thing is when it comes to jobs, again to make blanket statements that all of certain types of occupations are occupied by illegal immigrants is simply not accurate. Every occupation that we can think of has many times illegal, but most often legal immigrants who are working those jobs. And we ought to put American workers first. If we need, in my judgment, to increase the minimum wage, maybe we should do that. If we retrain American citizens and legal immigrants who are, in fact, here for the right reason and legally, we ought to do that.

There are a lot of things that we can do to try to fill those jobs that are now being filled by illegal immigrants, including mechanizing the growing of crops, for example. But let's put Americans first when it comes to the scarce jobs that we have in America.

Another subject that is often brought up is that the current system is not working. We're throwing a lot of money at the problem. Well, the reason the current system is not working is because we're not enforcing current laws. If we, for example, were to enforce laws that say you cannot hire someone who's in the country illegally, that would be the kind of disincentive that I was talking about a few minutes ago to even arrive in America at the beginning. But we are not enforcing current laws, and so we shouldn't be surprised that we're not having as much success as we should be having in reducing illegal immigration.

Also today, the Social Security system was mentioned. Is there somehow illegal aliens paying into the Social Security system are going to save it or help it? At the wages that the typical illegal immigrant makes, the Social Security system is actually going to pay that individual $100,000 or more over their lifetimes than they ever put into the system.

So for their participation in the Social Security system, the result is simply do you make the Social Security system bankrupt sooner. It's not going to help it or save it.

Finally, and I see my time is up, Mr. Chairman, so I will stop. I would ask those who speak so eloquently in favor of various immigration reform programs, what specific border security measures they support, because that's really what we need to learn if we're going to try to help our immigration system and reduce the number of illegal immigrants in the country today.

Now, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the time, and I'll yield back.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I thank the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Chairman, if I might inquire through the Chair, if there's not going to be any questions, then might I leave? I'll be happy to stay, but if there are not going to be any questions——

Mr. ISSA. There's only one more opening statement?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Yes, one more opening statement. And we will have questions.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Oh, okay.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. And, of course, you'll be the target of those questions.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. As I said again, I don't want to leave. You know I'll stay.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. We expect a Member or two to return. The Appropriations Committee is doing some work.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. It's important.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Thank you. Thank you. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California for purposes of an opening statement.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And perhaps I can move the process of opening a dialogue along.

I have to tell you, I believe that much of what you said was absolutely right. I also believe that all of what Chairman Smith said was absolutely right.

The challenge we have is in the Chairman's very question or very statement is what are we going to do about it. We do have a challenge and that is that, and I know that one of the representatives of Border Patrol is here. The border today, the border enforcement policy is like the French Maginot Line.

Now, for those who didn't study the failure of the French to win a war—except perhaps the French Revolution—ever, I'll switch it to baseball.

Imagine a baseball game in which the players, the outfielders, the short stop and each of the basemen must stand in one position and may not move. And if a ball happens to come to them, they can catch it. But they can't move. And they certainly cannot run over to another base to cover somebody.

That's our present border situation.

The Border Patrol—and I am within the Border Patrol envelope in my district, my entire district—what you discover is it's a silly game. It's a game of can you get over the border, and sure, you don't get over the border every time. But you don't have to. As Chairman Smith said, 40 percent of the people that are here illegally are overstays.

More importantly, if you don't get caught the first time, or if you get caught the first time, there's no penalty. Do it again. Do it again. Do it again.

In my district, we don't even have the ability to prosecute criminal alien coyotes, people who repeatedly bring over and sometimes lead to the death of people trying to come here illegally, albeit. But the people, the human traffickers that do it, aren't even being prosecuted.

I've called for a zero tolerance on coyotes. It doesn't seem like a big request. Guess what? It's left unanswered by this Administration, by the Justice Department, by the U.S. Attorney.

And repeatedly, we've had to call on county sheriffs to hold a repeat offender, a criminal alien who's come back yet again, because the Border Patrol is having to release them because the U.S. Attorney will not prosecute somebody who has committed crimes, been deported, and is back in the country.

So do we have problems? Absolutely.

But as Chairman Smith said, we must begin enforcing the border or all of us, including Chairman Smith, who do believe that a guest worker program similar to Bracero, some real guest worker, something where you're a guest, is not simply another name for permanent immigration is in order.

But the only way we're going to get it is if we have the cooperation of this Administration, if we have enforcement of laws.

That's a problem on both sides.

So for all of those who want to move the immigration issue along, absolutely we need to have a discussion on how we're going to deal with our need for labor and, Luis as you said, in all the sectors. It's not just about crops being picked in Imperial County or in San Diego County or in Riverside County, where I represent. It's about all these jobs.

However, for all of us represented, and I represent an approaching half Hispanic District, we have to recognize that we are doing no favors for all of our citizens, all the people who vote for us, all

the people who pay taxes, all the people who played by the rules to get here, if we do not protect them from simply having their job taken by the next person willing to work for less; and as you said, sometimes for minimum wage or less.

So I hope that from these hearings will come a cooperation on a bipartisan basis. From these hearings, I hope that your bill, which is often known as the McCain bill or the Flake bill, my bill, other people's bills will be rolled together. But at the same time, on behalf of the American people, we all have to insist that there be prosecution of criminal aliens, rounding up of gangs terrorizing our cities, zero tolerance for people who return who've been previously deported, zero tolerance for coyotes.

Only with that kind of enforcement are we going to get the kind of support by our constituents for a broad bipartisan overhaul of the system and some fairness, both for people who want to come here legally and work, and that's all they want to do, and for my constituents who are tired of the crime rates, tired of all of the negative sides that really do exist aligned with criminal alien and illegal aliens coming to this country.

So hopefully, from this hearing and from your statement and the other Members', we can recognize every one of you was right substantially on what you were saying, but we have to quit talking past each other. We have to talk about agreeing to the common solutions that are allowing us to move the legislation along, but also, on behalf of the Border Patrol, which operates literally in my district, we have to make it very clear that they have to be unshackled and allowed to do their job. It is insane to have them standing at first base hoping the ball comes to them and being able to do nothing if it doesn't.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I thank the gentleman.

The Chair will now entertain questions from Members of the Subcommittee, and, Mr. Gutierrez, we appreciate your being here.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. And staying.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. That's right.

The subject of the meeting is the impact of illegal immigration on congressional districts, on our constituencies.

Do you believe that illegal immigration has had a negative impact on America with regard to crime, and especially with regard to crime that is committed on immigrant populations, and especially illegal immigrant populations, as a result of the concentration of, in some cases, illegal immigrant populations and the fact that many of these illegal aliens do not wish to interact with law enforcement. And so, the minority of illegal aliens that come to do ill in America, not necessarily ill to American citizens, but do ill to immigrant populations that ultimately has a spillover effect, do you believe that illegal immigration has led to an increase in violent crime as a result of the explosion in illegal immigration?

Mr. GUTIERREZ. I bet that you and I, Mr. Hostettler, can find statistics and actual reality of illegal immigrants being part of crime in our neighborhoods, as we can find that among any other sector of our population in the human race unfortunately.

What I have called for, Mr. Chairman, is to fingerprint, to bring those out of the darkness and out of the shadows and say we want

your fingerprints. You're going to pay to have your fingerprints. And if you've violated any law, we want an expedited, immediate removal from the United States of America of those elements.

So in that sense, it would make the broader community. But what we have, Mr. Hostettler, is no system in place for, as Mr. Chertoff said, it would cost billions upon billions, upon billions of dollars to deport them all, and it would be an unfeasible thing to do. So if that's true, where is the political will, and where are the requisite resources to deport them all so that we can challenge those criminal elements within our community that live among the millions and millions of hard-working undocumented workers in our country, because I think we could both agree that, as we go to the vineyards of California or the apple orchards of Washington State, or the orange growers in Florida, what we find is hard-working immigrants, many of whom, hundreds of thousands of whom in the agricultural industry, a million of whom work really hard in pesticide-ridden, with no bathrooms, no educational system, very poor housing, doing work that I don't know I could find anyone in my district would challenge me and say, Congressman, how could you let those people do that work? Yet, we eat their apples. Eat their oranges. Eat their grapes. Drink the wine that's derived from them. And we benefit from their work.

So I want to see us clean up our security system—the criminal element, the terrorist element.

And I think the best way we could do that—one of the ways, not the best way—one of the ways we could do that is by offering them an opportunity.

And I'll end with this. You know President Reagan, in 1984, I've talked about Abraham Lincoln, in 1864, but in 1984, President Reagan, when running for reelection, debated the Democratic nominee, Mondale, and he was for immigration reform and for having a new system of legalization.

Indeed, they did that in 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act. And my point is if you look at the 3 million people that took advantage of that legalization program in 1986, they're better educated today. They have better salaries today. They're more productive today, and the vast majority of them speak English, and have sworn to the Constitution of the United States of America by becoming citizens of this country. So it worked.

Let's see if we can't revisit that future immigrants to the United States of America that want to come here to work, I would say they would come here to work. Their visa has expired. They would go back to their country.

We have to figure out a way—what we do with the 10 to 12 million that are already here.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. You bring up an excellent point about visas that expire.

I believe three of the 19 9/11 hijackers had visas that expired, and, according to the 9/11 Commission, two of those individuals, Mr. Alghamdi and Mr. Almihdhar, would have—the very—I think the 9/11 Commission said they could have been picked up on immigration violations.

But just as today, back then we did not enforce the immigration laws, so we didn't pick them up. And the 9/11 Commission said as

a result of their detention, the 9/11 plan could have been derailed. Those are the 9/11 Commission's conclusions.

Without objection, I will allow myself an additional minute for an additional question.

And so what I guess what I'm hearing you say is—and this will only require a yes or no—there's no contribution of violent crime disproportionate to the numbers of illegal aliens to the demographic addition to the country? You do not believe so?

Mr. GUTIERREZ. I don't believe so. I believe that there is a criminal element, as there are in all sectors of our society, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Second—my other question for the minute would be, earlier this year we held a hearing where representatives from the Center for Labor Market Studies of Northeastern University testified before this Subcommittee that between 2000 and 2004, there was a loss of jobs held by native-born American citizens of over 500,000, meaning that in 2004, there were 500,000, over 500,000, fewer jobs held by native-born Americans than there were in 2000.

However, they went on to testify that there were actually 2.3 million foreign-born workers, more foreign-born workers, employed than there were in 2000, for a net increase of about $1.7 million to $1.8 million (sic).

They went on to conclude that there is little empirical evidence to substantiate the notion, and I'm paraphrasing what they said, there is little empirical evidence to substantiate the notion that immigrants are doing large numbers of jobs that Americans will not do.

Do you believe that—do you believe that—and they went on to say something I'll ask you a question regarding their conclusion—do you believe that large numbers of native-born American citizens are being displaced by foreign-born workers, at least half of which we know are here illegally?

Mr. GUTIERREZ. I guess you and I would have to have a conversation about if we're talking about legal immigrants to the United States displacing American-born citizens or undocumented workers displacing American citizens.

I do know that as you—foreign-born American citizens——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. No. No. No.

And that's—they were actually immigrants, foreign-born——

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Americans. Yeah, but foreign-born legal permanent residents and citizens——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Well, not citizens—they weren't citizens.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Well, they could be either—well, foreign——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. According to these statistics, they weren't.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Legally in the United States?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Yes.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Legally in the United States. Here's what I do know about——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. No. No. No. Let me just say there were 1.7—the net that—one hundred percent of the net increase in jobs between 2000 and 2004 was contributed by foreign-born workers—immigrants——

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Legally in the United States?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Immigrants, illegal aliens—the folks don't say on here illegally when they do the census necessarily.

But they're not born in America.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Okay.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. So there are 500,000 fewer Americans, and, for example, between that 2000–2004, there are more—millions more of foreign-born workers, not all of them—most of them aren't citizens. Some of them are legal immigrants, but over half of them, according to the testimony, were here illegally.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Let me try, Mr. Chairman. And I'd love to have a conversation, a broader conversation.

If they didn't define who they were, here's how I can answer the question truthfully.

I do know that those that are here legally tend to have a higher education, get paid more, go to school, participate in our electoral system; that is, Americans—those of us that are here, not born in the United States, foreign-born, and——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I guess my question, Mr. Gutierrez, is——

Mr. GUTIERREZ. —I understand the immigration, but it is——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. —I have—well, let me ask you a question.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Okay.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I probably need to make this very clear.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Okay.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I have constituents that come up to me in Southwestern Indiana, and they say, Congressman, I can take you to a job site today, where there are illegal aliens working for my boss's competitor, and they are being paid wages lower than I am being paid. My boss's company cannot compete; therefore, my job is in peril. That's what they say.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Right.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. And indeed—and so my question is, do you think that those people are——

Mr. GUTIERREZ. And, again, I—then I'll try to answer your question in 15 seconds. Americans said that about the Irish as they were arriving, about Italians as they were arriving, about the Polish as they were arriving, about every immigrant group as they were arriving if you were here ahead of them, number one.

But number two, if they're here illegally, if they're here undocumented, then let's figure out a way that we define what jobs they can be in so that they do not compete in a market with Americans. I will be the first to join you in putting American citizens and those that are legally here and born in this country ahead of any foreigner coming here.

I believe that foreigners coming here should fill the jobs that no one else wants, and should work their way up the system as past immigrants have done in this nation.

And I will join you in making sure that those abuses are ended.

Let's figure out a way to get that done.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Thank you. The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry that our colleague, Mr. Issa, had to step out for a moment, but I do want to associate myself with his call.

Mr. Pearce, you were not here when he said that we needed to combine all of the issues dealing with immigration and really sit down breaching the partisanship and do it in a bipartisan manner.

Might I just simply say to my Chairman, we have talked on many occasions, but frankly the agenda of this Congress is set by your leadership, and we will not get to where you would like to go. As you well know, I joined you in your State, with your constituents, and saw the—visually, the realism and the descriptions of what you have just said here today, and associated myself not only with you during that time, but also with your constituents.

Frankly, I believe that Mr. Issa has an idea that many of us have already spoken to, and that is a working session that looks to the Secure America legislation, and might I say I have the Save America Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill that specifically speaks to the issue of ensuring that employers make a substantial effort to hire American workers before turning to foreign workers.

And then, at the same time, in being moved by the visit to the border in your region have authored the Rapid Response Border Protection Act, which I think must go hand in hand. It deals with not ignoring the Border Patrol agents and agency, but it deals with giving them every single skill and equipment piece that they need, from night goggles to computers, to helicopters, to speed boats, to training, to scholarships, to improving their health benefits, and improving their personnel status among others. And it responds to the issue of detention beds.

I only say this to follow up with both you and Mr. Gutierrez on the question that the Chairman has asked. And I'm going to go back to this citation dealing with the 500,000 jobs and 2.3 million and look at it in a different perspective.

He is saying all foreign workers. So first of all, let us look to how many of those are in corporate entities, how many fall under the H-1B, where the numbers are going up and up and up, which results in some of the overstays. And these are people who are educated and primarily they are overstays or they are undocumented because and the H-1Bs, of course, require you to be employed, and they don't want to leave.

So you have this gap of educated individuals who fall into this sort of, if you will, ever ending hole. And they fall into the lack of a comprehensive reform, because there's no place to put those individuals as well.

So we talk about the numbers. Let us make sure that we look at—that these are foreign workers and the last time I heard Governor Schwarzenegger was a foreign worker. I assume that he is documented as the Governor of the State of California.

But that is all of the individuals who may be foreign workers fall under this particular category.

Mr. Gutierrez, we come at it from a different perspective, but let me ask you this: Is there value to the idea of allowing people to earn access to legalization, whether they do it, as I have offered—a 5-year period, community service vetting, or to guest work and then transition. Doesn't that go to the question of the Chairman's that when you have people documented—and documented individuals can be hired and fired; that it means they won't be deported out of the country. Documented individuals can be paid the wages

of the private company that decides to pay them that. To add to the solution, I would also suggest that we all support prevailing wages, so no one will under compete in American companies.

But do you see the value in that some vehicle called earned access to legalization as opposed to what you have just indicated to us would be a long journey of deportation? And when you answer that question, would you provide that number for me again. You cited two—the billions and billions, but you also cited another number of how costly it would be for deportation.

Might I ask, Mr. Pearce, as well to answer the question, could you look comprehensively at immigration reform that would include, since you have so eloquently noted that your constituency is diverse, that would include strong border enforcement and resources that would empower our Border Patrol agents, because, as we stood at that border line, we heard the tale of woe—if I could only have resources; if I could only have 25,000 more Border Patrol agents. I happen to—and we may agree and disagree—two panelists may agree and disagree on that—but I believe that training professionals versus volunteers or Minutemen—and that's a conversation that I'm not really asking you to pursue as much as I am talking about the importance of reinforcing our resources at the border that helps to stem the tide somewhat of illegal immigration, because, as you well know, people fighting for economic survival sometimes are much more mightier than we might be.

But, Mr. Gutierrez, can you speak to the issue of the value of earned access to legalization and the whole concept of working on a comprehensive reform package?

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Sure.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. And without objection, the gentleman will have a minute to answer the question.

The subject of the hearing is not about a guest worker program, earned access, so the Chair will show great latitude in allowing the answers to questions that have no basis in the meeting for the hearing.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. But if the Chairman would yield, I would suggest that in the question of impact, we might be weaving into a cure.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. The law is the law. Reclaiming my time. The law is the law today with regard to illegal aliens and their presence in the United States. It is the law today. That is the subject of this hearing. We will have hearings on changing the law, to repealing the law or whatever in the future, but really the subject of the hearing today is the impact of illegal immigration as the law today defines illegal immigration on particular districts. And so but, given that, still, without objection, you can answer the question.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. We thank you for your latitude and the ability of the witnesses to answer.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Sure. Thank you.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. It has worked. In 1986, a Republican President, Ronald Reagan, signed the last legalization, earned legalization bill, the 1986 Immigration Reform Control Act.

It was a bipartisan bill. There was a majority of Republicans in the Senate; a majority of Democrats in the House of Representatives.

Today, there are 3 million people who successfully went through that process. They're better educated. They're more productive. The vast majority of them are American citizens, and, as we see, they have a higher participation rate in our electoral system than those of us who were born in the United States. They strengthen our nation. So it has worked.

I think bringing people out of the shadows and the darkness today is the only way. Mr. Chertoff said it would cost billions and billions and billions of dollars, and an estimate by a study made by a private think tank said it would cost $42 billion a year for 5 years to attempt to deport the $10 to $12 billion. So it's unfeasible. So you need to incentivize them to come out of the darkness, as we did in 1986, and make people Americans, permanent residents of the United States and give them the ability to do that; and I think, Madam Jackson Lee, Congresswoman, I think the way we do it is we penalize them. Let's fine them a thousand five hundred bucks. Let's figure out what the fine is. Let's talk about their contributions to Social Security, and whether they're entitled to them, because they were here undocumented while they were working. We can figure it out. Let's put them into a program for 7 years and say, well, you don't get anything for 7 years unless you work, you pay taxes, you follow all the laws. Let's put them into indentured servitude programs, but let's give them hope at the end of the day that after they've proven to us, they already are hard-working, committed people to America, that we say at the end of the day, okay, you've earned it. You get to join the rest of us, as our history has always allowed us to do in our immigration policy.

So I join the Congresswoman in seeking that earned legalization.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Pearce?

Mr. PEARCE. Yes. Mr. Chair and Madam Jackson Lee, your question is right on point.

We have a very diverse population. We're a majority minority State, and I will tell you that at our 18 town hall meetings, there was unanimous consent that we should enforce the border strictly. It should be done fairly. It should not be done heavily handed against those people who've come illegally, but it should be strict.

There is also consensus that it should be done by the trained professionals. I think you're exactly right on that.

But two comments really stood out in the comments by the Hispanic community and many of the illegals come through our district. One was a young Hispanic gentleman in Dona Ana County, the southernmost county up against the border, saying that we should not go at this piecemeal like we've done it before; that we need this time to fix all the parameters in one fashion. That's the comprehensive bill.

The other one, her, she lived up in the northern part of the district, in fact, in the southern part of Heather Wilson's district, and she, her father had come over as an illegal, had become legalized. But he had been here less than 20 years, and he was beginning to say we must stop the flow of illegals into this country, and he's in a predominantly Latino area in Southern Albuquerque, and she was coming up saying please we must begin to address this question of illegal immigration.

I think that in the end, the consensus also was deeply among Hispanics, African Americans, Anglos, whoever, the consensus was do not give these illegals, even if you let them work, don't give them amnesty. Don't let them become citizens, because most of them have friends and family on the other side of the border who are trying to come here legally, and we've had testimony that it has taken up to 20 years to get the right to come here and get a green card, permanent status, then citizenship. And they're saying you should have a different pipeline for guest workers; that they should not get de facto citizenship, should not get ahead of those people who have been willing to wait and follow the law.

And that was a very strong stand on the part of the Hispanics: please don't compromise our standards. Let those people chose to go back and get in line if they want to come here and become citizens or let them chose to stay here and be guest workers, but don't give them citizenship ahead of those people who have been willing to stand in their country's in line and do it legally.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. If I could just quickly. Our proposal says they have to go to the end of the line. We don't put anybody in the middle of the line, and, true, in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control bill, they did move to the head of the line. We do not propose that.

We simply propose that they get in line, but while they're in line, they continue to work. They continue to raise their families. They continue to contribute, and maybe they don't move to citizenship; maybe they don't move to bring their relatives to this country ahead of the others that are already in line from all different countries of the world until that other line that exists is already exhausted.

So we'll put them at the end of the line. I agree with you.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Thank you. The Chair recognizes the gentlelady from California for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Congresswoman Jackson Lee.

We had some discussions just yesterday, where I said to Congresswoman Jackson that I think the Members of Congress either we were talking in the Black Caucus, and I think all of the Members of Congress really need what she refers to as a tutorial. You know people are all over the place, and they understand this issue differently.

I think that there are real concerns about people who work for lesser wages and the question really becomes whether or not they're undermining other people's ability to work or whether they are doing jobs that others don't want to do.

And I think these issues are not understood, because I don't think the proper study has gone into these issues, and I know this. I mean people are coming to this country and looking for opportunity, looking for a chance to have a decent quality of life. I support having close—I mean having strong border controls, and I don't support people coming across the border, illegal immigration. I don't support any of that.

But I do support some kind of effort to provide for people the opportunity to have citizenship, particularly people who have been in this country for long periods of time. I've got people in my district

who have been there for 30 and 40 and 50 years. They don't have anyplace to go back to. This is their country.

And I think that that has to be recognized. There are some people that I would like to see deported. I'd like to see them deported whether they're Latino, Black, or anything else. They're wreaking havoc, and the gangs and that kind of thing, and I've said this once, and I'll say it again: The gang members really bother me. I'm very upset about all gang members—Black, Latino, what have you. But I'm concerned that there are gang members who come across the border, and they commit crimes or get involved with some of this violence, and then they slip back. And I understand that there are some that are coming back and forth.

And I think, you know, I can be very, very comfortable with dealing with that as an issue that, you know, I understand very well.

The issues that I don't understand very well are these: I hear some of our more conservative Members talking about this problem and talking about, you know, deportation, but what I don't really hear is an honest discussion about the division among the conservatives in this Congress, where I think the Chamber of Commerce and those who are very much interested in labor are willing to take some very, very big steps in order to maintain this workforce.

As a matter of fact, the last time I was in Palm Springs, California, it was very clear to me. If you deport folks in Palm Springs, that closes the city down. I mean it would just close down. All of the work is being done by a combination of legal and illegal immigrants in Palm Springs, and I have to tell you the hotels and the chambers of commerce, et cetera, are not willing to give that up. And they're not going to give it up. I mean we could fight all day and talk all day about deportation and whether or not, you know, we're going to have a guest worker program or whether we're going to have some kind of earned legalization, what you have. But I am convinced—and I feel pretty comfortable that the moneyed interests of America, the real capitalists, the major corporations of America will see to it that there will be no massive deportation of the people who are making them rich. I'm convinced of that.

I mean I—we can just sit back, and we can watch it happen, because that is the truth of the matter.

So having said all of that, I do there's room for the tutorials or the education, the information sharing, the real facts about all of this that we need to have in this Congress, and not just in the caucuses where we're talking about them.

I think that the—I would really like to see my friends on the opposite side of the aisle and the more conservative voices have a real discussion among themselves about this issue, because, for the most part, the—well, there are those who are really, really, really supporting border patrols and talking about deportation, et cetera, et cetera, but in that same caucus, we have the voices that are emerging in a very strong way about preserving the workforce, because it's—if the workforce is not preserved, then the country won't be able to operate. It just won't be able to carry out many of the services that are being provided, and that discussion has not really taken place yet.

So I am looking forward to that.

Having said all of that, I'm interested in Sheila Jackson Lee's earned program—what do you call it?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Earned Access to Legalization.

Ms. WATERS. Yeah. Earned Access to Legalization program. I'm interested in how we can honor some of the people who have been here for many, many years, and deportation is not realistic, and it's not going to happen, and again the only people I'm interested in deporting are the gang members who cause me problems in my district.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I thank the gentlelady. We're going to go to a second round of questions, and I want to ask—and I want to assure the gentlelady from California that I can speak from fairly good experience that conservatives are talking about this, and it is an interesting dialogue, an interesting discussion.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Chairman? I need to—I'd like to be excused.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Yes.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Thank you. I hope you have a good day.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Thank you, Mr. Gutierrez.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Pearce. Thank you, Members of——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I will—I had a question, but I would just make a statement. A lot of discussion is being had today about this idea of mass deportation, like that's necessary if we're going to enforce the immigration laws.

In 1986, workforce enforcement became the law. That's the law of the land. It is illegal in the United States of America to hire and employ an illegal alien. That is the law, just as it is the law in the United States of America to pay Federal income tax.

Now, my question would be, Mr. Gutierrez, and it might be for Mr. Pearce, that if we had the IRS in place, and there was no possibility—the purpose for the Internal Revenue Code is to acquire revenues for the operation of the Federal Government.

If the IRS was in place, and everyone that made out a 1040 form that supposedly paid taxes realized there was never ever any possibility of being audited at all, my question is, what would happen to revenue levels?

I would say they would probably drop off. And, therefore, the law would be moot. The law would not be enforced.

Likewise, if there's not ever a chance of enforcing the immigration law with regard to worksite compliance, then you're going to have the law flouted, and you're going to have illegal aliens flood across the border and be employed in America.

But going back to the IRS, the knowledge that there is going to be an audit causes most of us to be pretty honest. I'm a 100 percent honest with our taxes.

Likewise, the knowledge that you are going to be investigated with regard to violating Federal law and Federal immigration law, will cause a lot of people to aggressively adhere to the law. That would potentially remove what Barbara Jordan referred to in her commission as the jobs magnet. If you eliminate the jobs magnet, and there are no jobs, theoretically at an extreme for illegal aliens in America, the question hypothetically, rhetorically, how many, then, do you have to deport?

And so that is the question.

And the question that I have—and so, the discussion of deportation is really a red herring. If the worksite enforcement laws are enforced by the Administration, as article II of the Constitution requires them to do, then we have the same situation with the adherence to the immigration law that we do with the Internal Revenue Code.

Now, a lot of discussion, Mr. Pearce, has been had on this idea of earned access, and I'll couch it in these terms: First of all, the people violate the law by their presence, their coming into the country. When they step across that border, for better or for worse, a Democratically-controlled Congress in 1986 said that if they are also hired, they're violating Federal law, as well, not only their presence here, but if they're violating the Federal law.

The discussion was had that we will fine them. We will send them back to the back of the line. We will do this to them. We will do all these things to them. That's going to require oddly enough, enforcement of an immigration law, and not only that but the Border Patrol is going to allow these people to come through because they're coming through legally to work in our districts and work on border districts. But if the past experience informs of us anything, they're going to come to Southwestern Indiana, among other places, and they're going to come and acquire work and do other things not necessarily as virtuous as work, and impact our communities.

And so my question, Mr. Pearce, is this: Why should our constituents believe you or me when we say if you give us a guest worker program, we're going to enforce the law, when, in fact, history indicates that we have the tools today; for example, for worksite enforcement, for a lot of the expedited removal to fill in the blank. All these tools are—and the Department of Homeland Security has decided recently to actually to begin to enforce these laws that are already in place.

Why should they trust us this second time to say this time we're going to actually enforce the immigration law?

Mr. PEARCE. Sure. It's a great question, Mr. Chairman, and there are two elements to an answer that need to be discussed in my opinion. The first is as process I don't think that when we set up the original law, that there was a very good process to distinguish between who had a legitimate presence here as a legal alien and who didn't.

So I've got employers in my district telling me in my hometown that they're going to shut down their second business. They've got—this Hispanic lady has two restaurants. She can oversee one personally, and has to hire a manager. She said, I can't tell by myself which green cards are green enough, and which are not green enough.

So there's that process of enforcement that never was set up. And it puts people in an extremely awkward position trying to find the work.

But the second, more compelling answer I think that applies exactly to what you're talking about is the imbalance between needed workers and available workers.

I will tell you everywhere I go in the country, I'm always talking to employers because I myself had to go out and find employees, and we had to find qualified employees. We generally pad in the

$30,000 to $80,000 range, so it wasn't like we're feeding off of people here with no skills.

And I will tell you that always the answer among employers—and it's what I found to be true: that we just need two things in employees. We need employees that can pass a drug screen and that will show up for work tomorrow. If they don't know English, we'll teach it to them.

Right now, you have a tremendous imbalance without available workers, and that imbalance is going to accelerate in the next years. If we have a guest worker program—and the imbalance is going to accelerate, because 40 million Baby Boomers are reaching retirement age, so the pressure is even going to be greater.

Now, what I would tell anyone who's asking why should we believe you is that that imbalance is going to be cured. It's either going to be cured legally or illegally.

And in partial answer to Maxine's question that is it exploitation. These are not exploitation wages. I will tell you over the weekend that one dairyman has put in $250,000 of houses because the law says if you bring them here to work as immigrants, you got to provide housing and utilities. So $250,000 to where he can bring people in. It says he also has to pay at least a wage above minimum wage of $7.78 or he can't bring them here. He's paying over $10, plus $10 for the housing and utilities. So he's now at twenty something dollars.

That's in the dairy industry. The imbalance is so great that people will either come here illegally or legally because they're going to get paid better than they can at home.

Now, in the oil industry, which I made my living in, right now jobs as a driller—drilling rigs are kind of the basic of the oil industry—a driller is making over $100,000, with no high school education, no college education generally, and people are making—that are working on that crew anywhere from $40,000 to $60,000 annually.

So these are not exploitation wages.

It's that the labor supply is so short, and the employer so desperate that right now we don't have a way for these people to come into the country.

I testified earlier that it's a 20-year wait sometimes to get here legally, so people are scooting away from the borders and coming through illegally to satisfy this need for employees that's going to be satisfied or we're going to send the jobs out to where they are. We're either going to bring workers in or send the jobs out.

So if we have a guest worker program to where people come through—and I suggested on my tours, and everybody thought it was a good idea—all cultures thought it was a good idea, a biometric scan. You have a retina, fingerprint, and then your picture comes up. Your employer, the potential employer looks and says that's you. Here is your Social Security number, so they take out Social Security pay. You pay taxes.

Those things would take that pressure off the illegal part and allow it to become legal, with that credit card looking—just like our voting card here in Congress—that voting card giving you access to come into the country. You go to your job. If you don't report within

2 weeks that you're working, now you go into illegal status, and there's a far smaller pool.

So we take the pressure off the border. Our agents, then, have more access and more resources to direct into those unmonitored uses of the border, because you take so much pressure off if you give legal status and legal entry to the people who are just coming here to make a better way for their family and in addition satisfying a great need for employees that we in the country have.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Would your competitor hire a $100,000 a year legal driller if he knew that he could hire a $20,000 a year illegal driller, and he would never face any consequences, as is the case today.

Mr. PEARCE. I will tell you that you can't answer for every single person.

I will tell you that there are people out there who will beat any system, but the dairyman that I talked to, a long-time acquaintance, go to Sunday school together, and he could be hiring illegals right now. I guarantee that the people are there and available. But he's trying to follow the law. He's trying to find—follow the letter of the law, so he's out $250,000 in order to go get these legal immigrants who are allowed to come in under the Agricultural Work Program. He can only hire them for 10 months, and so that is a piece that we should attend to.

But I think his answer is that, no, he wouldn't hire that $4 an hour cash employee. If he would do that, he wouldn't have put in the $250,000 set up to put people into housing, which the law requires.

I think that most businesses would jump at the chance to operate legally. There are some who would not frankly if we were to give legal recourse to the employers who will do things right, I will guarantee you, the market itself will begin to discriminate against those people who are law breakers and who would exploit.

I just think most people just want to be out of the shadows operating correctly.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. The gentlelady from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

As I listen to the discourse between you and the distinguished gentleman from New Mexico and I listen to my colleague, the distinguished gentlelady from California, mention I think a very now evident concept that were discussing, a tutorial, and the reason why I say that is because I think if we are realistic, we know that leadership is talking about potentially post the Christmas holiday for serious consideration some of these very important issues.

I would be surprised if we were pre-holiday that this would occur, but surprises do happen.

The reason why I say that, Steven, is because as I listen to you in New Mexico, what the Chairman is saying is that he will have a Midwesterner, if I might say the Rust Belt, look in great frustration and consternation about the job loss. You, on the other hand, can live with strong border security and the recognition that you have substantial industries, businesses that really would welcome that population.

Now, let me wear another hat. I confront in urban population with African Americans, who will raise the question that even if we

are discussing the issue of immigration, that they may be impacted negatively.

What is the basis of that? Unemployment. Poverty. The lack of jobs. Our social societal ills that we have not responded to. Job creation.

So I would say to my Chairman, he's discussing the issues that I would be discussing. He's discussing the lack of job opportunity, poverty, the lack of an economic engine, alongside of employer sanctions. The difficulty with employer sanction is, of course, we're talking about them now. They've been in place. But we have been—and I would admit I'm not the enforcer. I wasn't in Congress as these laws were started, but I can certainly look back and say, yep, they have not been enforced.

So I think the challenge that we have is that we will not move past first base if we cannot convince the Chairman that the answer to his constituents' question may not be totally, if you will, infused, invested in the immigration issue. It may be partly so, but it may be a variety of economic issues. And maybe we can have a consensus around employer sanctions, but I don't think we can get away from the comprehensive immigration reform.

With respect to the African American community, I think it's important for me to say to them, I support increasing the minimum wage, and this is I saying it, and those will join in increasing the minimum wage. I think that would impact the constituents of the Chairman in Indiana. I support the idea of prevailing wages. I support employer sanctions, and might I say, though this hearing does not relate to trade bills. I certainly oppose the lifting of American jobs and sending them elsewhere, which has been a decided—has a decided impact on our economy.

I say this because Barbara Jordan was a predecessor—one of the predecessors of the office that I hold. Now deceased, I know that the climate was very different when she wrote this report. There were elements in it that we could agree with and some not. I think we failed in not pursuing at least the question of employer sanctions. But on the other hand, you'll speak to the Chamber of Commerce, and they will be—abhor employer sanctions because they will say to you what do you expect people to do.

So my question to you is—it looks like I'm doing a tutorial or a philosophical dialogue or discourse, but my frustration is that if we—and these are good hearings, Mr. Chairman, by the way—but it does evidence the frustration that we have and probably the divide of ever coming to sit down and try to iron out what we need to do, supporting the Border Patrol on illegal immigration, if we keep that terminology in that they would help us on that, providing the workforce, but, yet, saying to the American worker—and, by the way, legislation that I have works to recruit American workers, protect American jobs, does outreach in minority communities, trains minorities who may not have jobs—but the point is what you've seen from your town hall meetings, can we get away with the horse being out of the barn, the chicken and egg concept? Are we not going to have to look at this comprehensively, because the Southern border States we can get together. We might even be able to get together, Dems and Republicans, because we're facing the

same issue, short of my unique issue dealing with the African American population, which I think we need to address.

But where are we going to get that consensus from our Rust Belt—I don't know if you would include the Western States—to be able to understand that we cannot go without doing anything. We cannot go with only dealing with border security, which I think we have some meeting of the minds. Mr. Pearce, would you?

Mr. PEARCE. Thank you, and I always appreciate the gentlelady's approach. It makes me realize that we are much closer to consensus in the Congress and in the country than what many of ourselves believe. As the Chairman mentioned, we have been having deep discussions on the conservative side talking about enforcement and the guest worker program, and I think that there is such significant movement among our conference and I suspect the same is true in the Democrats' side that the people are realizing we must do something.

I think Americans across the country agree that it should not be the same sort of illegal act to come here and try to make a better way for your family. In other words, that should not be as illegal as importing drugs or humans—sex trafficking. The—back to your point about the problems in the African American country and——

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Community.

Mr. PEARCE. —communities in the large cities. It breaks my heart. We're about 5 percent unemployment, and I will tell you as an employer who has tried to hire people, at 5 percent, you're not getting people who will walk through the door that really have the skill sets to really work. And my wife and I committed early on that we're going to reach out into the community that does not get hired much, and we're going to work ourselves, and we're going to just solve one or two cases. With 50 employees, you're not going to solve.

We had one guy that was working for us when I had sold the company after coming here. He was forty-something years old. He was tattooed from head to toe, and on every part of himself. We hired him, and he was the first—it was the first full-time job he ever had.

Now, he has stuck, but so many didn't. We hired one young man that was about 5 years younger than myself. I knew his family—well respected; had been in prison most of his life for doing drugs. We hired him. I got—I called to the penitentiary and said if you let him out, I'll hire him. We brought him in and said, we'll get you counseling, whatever we can do. It did not take in his case, and in many cases it did not take.

We have arrived at such a point that many of the people who are not working today don't have the skill sets and the discipline, and that is up to us as a nation to solve that problem. My wife and I right now are—we have a small effort to try to provide mentors for people in the State, because if we don't catch this next population, this group of junior high and high school students that are just wondering if they can be a productive part of society, if we don't provide the help to bridge them back in and literally take that mantra that has grown offensive to some of not leaving any child behind, if we don't solve that, this country has such deep problems exactly from the part that you're talking about, we—I see almost

unanimous consent that once we begin to solve in some way the availability of workers in a legal fashion, that sanctions to those people or those employers who will break the law and go out and hire people and keep them under the shadows, keep them off the tax rolls, and keep them away from the protection of the labor departments, those people need sanctions, and I would find unanimous consent among my Mexican constituents as saying yes, once we help them solve their problem, then there's no going back.

Again, that would answer some of Chairman Hostettler's question—how should the American people believe us. And your points are very, very well made and, I just think that the future of our country is at stake, because the international competition now is such that when I grew up, it was those cheap Japanese imports that were threatening to take our jobs. I have been to China, and I will tell you they are not cheap imitations. These are great, great replacements, knock offs of the intellectual property that we worked here to create, and they steal. North Face jackets—$150 bucks in the stores here—$13, and they're exact replicas, maybe even better. And when we allow our intellectual properties to be counterfeited and stolen like that, we're at the risk of losing our entire economic base.

But India is providing really strong competition in the technology sectors. We must in this country be aware of the threats to our overall economy and the hope and opportunity for all of us.

But I appreciate your reminder about those people who we'd have difficulty discussing this in that constituency, and I appreciate that.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I thank the gentlelady.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, would the gentlelady and the Chairman just indulge me for 1 minute. I know there's a second round to the gentlelady. I just wanted to thank Mr. Pearce for the charitable approach that he has taken with respect to the constituents in a State that has probably a very low African American population, and, therefore, some of the ills that face society are magnified.

But I do want to just get for the record that when we talk about this problem, that's why the Chambers, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce should be engaged because they are very supportive, as the gentlelady has said, of this question of reform.

She had mentioned that Palm Springs would close down, and I'm sure there's some diversity there, but included in my points, of course, were the future college graduates of historically Black colleges and other institutions—engineers who are unemployed, which I think tracks the Chairman's point of his constituency that may be an Anglo, may be a White population saying they don't have jobs, but we have populations trained that don't have jobs for us to realistically be able to answer the question of the impact of illicit immigration, but also the impact of it on certain segments. We need to deal with being able to say to these individuals you will have work, too, and tell them that the reform of the immigration system will enhance them getting work—we have to make it work—and at the same time be true to our words that they will have work, because I'm talking about college graduates and others who still suffer unemployment, and it happened to be in this in-

stance African American, and though I don't step away from immigration reform, they complain, rightly so that they're without work.

Mr. PEARCE. The gentlelady is correct, and I will tell that rather than finding less competition of that sort, an amazing thing happened back before the dot com collapse and that is that we pretty well put fiber optics all the way across India. Now, India is the source of many of our very highest caliber scientists and mathematicians in this country. They are such a small percent of the U.S. population, but the Indians who have come here and lived as citizens are less than 1 percent of the population, yet they provide 10 percent of the graduates every year from the Ivy League schools.

But now, then, with India being wired with fiber optics, those scientists and those great brains can stay at home and do the same thing over the Internet. I think that we have a challenge to come together as Democrats, Republicans, and Independents and look at the challenges that face us, to gird our loins and to fight the fight to preserve what we have in this nation. Any guest worker program I think should always recognize that Americans, if they will fill the jobs, should get the first job at it. And I think we're all seeing the same specter and the same thing that we should be afraid of, and the same really things that we should solve, and I appreciate the viewpoint.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. The gentlelady from California.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much.

I'd like to ask a little bit more about the guest worker program that you described somewhat or alluded to where you have an identification card, and if you're working, you're gainfully employed, you may be in this country. How does it work? I mean are you here forever if you work forever? Do you get citizenship if you work for 10 years, 20 years? How does your idea of a guest worker program work?

Mr. PEARCE. The difficulty if we allow the guest worker to gain citizenship while they're here is that we don't take any of the pressure off the border, and you have to understand that the only—I think the only solution to our border problem is to take the pressure off of those untended portions. My district is 180 miles. And if you put enough pressure at the point of entry, they're simply going to scoot over. And we can build that fence that someone has suggested, but until we put an agent every mile along that fence, they're going to come through.

So my impression of a guest worker program is that people really will have to determine if they want to come here for citizenship or if they're simply satisfied to come here as workers. And I will you that we had illegals show up at our town hall meetings saying, I don't ever want to be a citizen. I just want to come here and make enough so that I can go home and be self sufficient.

And we have people who have lived here 40 years legally, working and saying, you ask them where they're from. I'm from Chihuahua. I'll go home when I retire.

And so there is a mentality that says we love coming here. It's the same mentality that you and I have. I was——

Ms. WATERS. So the guest worker would be free to travel back and forth across the border?

Mr. PEARCE. Free travel back and forth—just access.

And these same people said if you give us that access, we're probably not going to bring our families, because they want their kids to grow up in the same high school where they graduated, the same as I wanted my daughter to graduate where I did.

The said if we leave our families, then we don't have so much pressure on the social systems. We'll go back and forth. That's pretty much how it used to work in the Bracero Program, and I have a lot of Hispanics who were here as Braceros and said, why did we stop that program? It seemed to work pretty well.

And I think that it's up to all of us to determine what we want——

Ms. WATERS. So you're talking about the possibility of a guest worker program with strong employer enforcement?

Mr. PEARCE. Mm hmm.

Ms. WATERS. That would eliminate the possibility of employers having illegal immigrants without the documentation, without the paying into the system, all of that—that's what you are describing?

Mr. PEARCE. Absolutely. And, again, right now, we require enforcement by the employer. That one Hispanic lady says I got to shut down a restaurant, because I can't—the people I hire can't tell if those green cards are green enough. Those were her words.

Ms. WATERS. So you would couple this with strong enforcement on the border, and for those people who are in the system standing line in their correct places to apply for citizenship? That would be kind of your general program?

Now, let me—I like the idea that you understand the need for education and training. And you talk about, you know, those individuals, be they Black or what have you, who are underemployed or don't have skill sets, et cetera, and this country appears to ignore that, while we are chasing people from other places to fill these jobs like the citizens of India who have become very popular in Silicon Valley and other places where they were providing the skill sets and like you said, because of fiber optics they are doing more and more because they can do those jobs from wherever they are.

Now, wouldn't it be interesting if we could convince the Congress of the United States, Democrats and Republicans, to really invest in human potential, and invest in job training, invest in getting people trained for jobs that are otherwise going to India or other places? It costs money, and I've not seen a willingness on the other side of the aisle to do that. I can recall a job training program that I just had a good fight on the floor, and some years ago, following the problems of South Los Angeles and trying to encourage this Congress to do a job training program for what I called 17- to 30-year-olds with what I consider supports the training while they're in training, et cetera, et cetera, and you kind of mentioned people who are coming out of penal institutions and on and on and on.

Well, I like your idea that we should be supportive of that. It costs money to do this. It costs money to train, but I'm prepared to do tax breaks and to give tax incentives to businesses that are willing to do some real training. I don't want the paper training. I don't want what happened with the Private Industry Councils and other kinds of so-called training programs. But I do want real

training by industry, and I'm prepared to do—support tax incentives—all of that.

But I guess the big question is, do you think that your side of the aisle would be prepared to couple kind of your idea with job training that costs money, because I tell you if you come up with something like that, and there may be a lot of people who would be willing to look closer at your guest worker program.

Right now, I'm not there on the guest worker program, because I still think we'll get—and I could be dated on this—but I still think of it as kind of exploitation. Let them come and work, but don't try to stay here. We want you—and I still think of it as cheap labor. I'm very impressed with your industry and the amount of money you pay, but that's not most of our undocumenteds. It's not most of those who come across the border seeking better opportunity. You know, I'm just a, if I may, I'm just outraged by what's happening in New Orleans and on the Gulf where major contractors are exploiting workers from Guatemala and places.

There was one story that it has brought tears to my eyes where Guatemalans were sleeping on the ground. They had inadequate clothing. Not only were they employed to do some of the work that these big contractors who got no bid contracts to do this work, some of the exploited workers were thrown off the job and they didn't even pay them for what they worked for.

So I mean it's great to hear about hundred dollar an hour jobs or whatever, but the fact of the matter is most are in low-wage jobs, the very low-wage jobs.

However, having said all of that, if there was a real willingness to invest in job training so that we eliminate the argument about people who feel that the—the undocumenteds who are taking jobs and but people feel that they don't have the opportunity to get trained for jobs so they can get the skill sets. They'll never get the experience without the training or somebody taking a chance, as you described.

If we could figure some of that out, and couple that with a guest worker program, I may—you know I may not only be supportive of some that, but would encourage some other people to be supportive of it.

So what do you think about some real investment in human potential for job training and for people who have been kind of dropped off of America's agenda, some of them who dropped out of school that shouldn't have, but, you know, we could find their way back in with some support. What about supporting people while they're in job training. If you have to be in job training for 6 months, you got to eat. You got to have transportation. You've got to, you know, be able to stay there to be trained.

What about that kind of support?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. At this point, job training is a fantastically stimulating issue. It just doesn't happen to be the prerogative of this Committee. And in the future, we will be taking up the issue of guest worker programs and earned access and every other discussion of allowing more people into the country to work from outside the country.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. But at this point——

Ms. WATERS. Will the Chairman yield?

Mr. HOSTETTLER. I will yield.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I thought this was about the impact on our districts today.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Of illegal aliens.

Ms. WATERS. Okay. Of undocumented.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Are you going to be training illegal aliens in your job training bill?

Ms. WATERS. No. The question becomes, yes, we have undocumenteds in my district, many of whom are working in very low paying jobs, being exploited, and we have people, African Americans and others, in the same district who complain about the undocumenteds, but they wish to be able to have access to jobs, which would require job training.

So I think it fits your subject matter.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Yielding——

Ms. WATERS. Yes.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. —regaining my time.

Ms. WATERS. Sure.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. And so my question to the gentlelady is so it is your experience that illegal aliens are displacing significant numbers in the workforce of your constituents?

Ms. WATERS. No, that is not my experience.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Reclaiming my time——

Ms. WATERS. My experience——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Then who needs job retraining?

Ms. WATERS. I think that there is a need for job training if there were no illegals or undocumented——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Okay. Very good. But that being the case, that isn't the subject of——

Ms. WATERS. And——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. —this hearing. In fact, we will now return to the subject of the hearing, which was the impact of illegal immigration.

I appreciate the gentlelady's insight. We will be taking up a bill that does—I mean we will be taking up hearings that do discuss this issue, and in that context, but the gentlelady's statement is that illegal aliens are not displacing constituents in——

Ms. WATERS. No, I didn't say that either. So you keep saying what the gentlelady said, but you're not framing it correctly. I think I first started out by saying you don't know and I don't know, because we don't have the information. We don't have the studies that have been done. People are——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. And the answer is——

Ms. WATERS. —alluding to it.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. —the gentlelady does not know about these.

Ms. WATERS. No. The answer is that the Chairman does not know.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. No. I know.

Ms. WATERS. Along with the gentlelady.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. No. I know wholeheartedly.

Ms. WATERS. Okay. I yield——

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Come on back to my district——

Ms. WATERS. Okay. All right.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Tonight.

Ms. WATERS. Thanks for the time.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. So at this point, I want to thank the gentleman from New Mexico for his input in this very important subject. All Members will have 5 legislative days to make additions to the record. The business before the Subcommittee being completed——

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And may I, Mr. Chairman—if I would add my appreciation for the sticktoitness of the gentleman from New Mexico, and certainly appreciate the other Members that you have stuck it out. And we appreciate your testimony. It will be valued in this process, and we're going to get some jobs for the people that Congressman Waters and myself are talking about and the jobs for the Chairman and comprehensive immigration reform.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Without objection, we're adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:09 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN ABNER CULBERSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Good afternoon, Chairman Hostettler, Ranking Member Ms. Jackson Lee, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the problem of illegal immigration and its effect on my congressional district and the State of Texas.

I represent the 7th District of Texas, an area roughly 200 square miles that covers suburban west and northwest Houston. The problems that my district and Texas face are not unique to border States, but they are unique compared with other parts of the country. Roughly 1.5 million illegal immigrants live in Texas. These illegal immigrants work in Texas, their children attend our schools, they use our public hospitals, and if they commit crimes—they are detained in our jails.

What makes Texas unique to the rest of the country is the size of our border with Mexico; Texas borders Mexico for 1,240 miles along the Rio Grande. The length of the border presents unique challenges for communities and law enforcement along the border. In the past year, the numbers of Mexicans and OTMs has surged along with substantial increases in the quantity of drugs being moved across our southern border. The increases in human and drug trafficking are due, in part, to the fact that organized gangs and cartels now control the movement of people and drugs into the U.S. We have an obligation to address the problem now before the violence on the other side of the border spills over into our country, and irreparably damages the special relationship that Texas and Mexico have enjoyed for over a century. Congress must work to ensure that legislation is passed to secure our borders.

I became particularly concerned with the issue of illegal immigration after a town hall meeting was held on April 25, 2004 by CIS and ICE officials in Houston to assure illegal immigrants that federal immigration laws would not be enforced. Hearing law enforcement officers assuage law breakers that our laws would not be enforced is completely unacceptable. After this meeting was held, I voiced my serious concerns to the Bush Administration, the leadership in Congress, and the committees of jurisdiction. Broadcasting the fact that Houston is a safe haven for illegal immigrants only encourages more illegals to come to Houston.

The following month I visited the Houston CIS office and was shocked to find the policies and procedures employed in that office were contrary to the intent of immigration laws passed by Congress. I discovered that adjudicators do not have the tools needed to conduct background checks on immigration benefit applicants. I learned that not one adjudicator had been trained to detect a potential terrorist. I learned that adjudicators were granted time off and other incentives for rapidly processing applicants instead of being rewarded for conducting thorough background checks on applicants. I learned that marriage fraud was rampant. In general, I found that immigrants applying for legal status were treated as customers. The American taxpayer was not the customer, and in fact, the taxpayer was not even considered by CIS officials. Awarding the greatest privilege in the history of the world—American citizenship—without proper vetting and background checks cheapens that privilege. Therefore, I included report language in the FY2005 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill that sought to correct these policies:

IMPLEMENTATION OF CONGRESSIONAL INTENT

> The Committee is concerned that agencies of the Department are not complying with Congressional intent, particularly in carrying out homeland security missions and priorities. The Committee directs that neither the Secretary nor any other employee of the Department prescribe any policy, pro-

cedure or regulation that would be contrary to or frustrate the intent of Congress as expressed in law.

HOMELAND SECURITY MISSION PRIORITY

The Committee is concerned that DHS agencies are not placing top priority on their homeland security missions set forth in the Homeland Security Act, but are in some cases giving more weight to less urgent, legacy activities. It is the duty of each officer and employee of each element of the Department to protect the homeland of the United States, including by ensuring that potential terrorist and criminal aliens do not enter the United States. The Committee therefore directs the Secretary to ensure that the policies and procedures of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and every other element of the Department of Homeland Security are consistent with this duty, and that such requirements are made clear to each officer and employee of the Department.

After my visit to the Houston CIS office, I posed questions to the Homeland Security Inspector General Clark Kent Ervin. He began an investigation into the policies and procedures in the Houston office, but I have been unable to obtain a copy of the report. The two officials in Houston CIS and ICE who participated in the town-hall meeting have been replaced. My goal is to continue working with federal immigration officials in Houston to fix the obvious security risks that are exacerbated by lax enforcement policies.

Border Security:

Since the April town hall meeting, I have learned that Special Interest Aliens (SIAs)—aliens from countries where al-Qaeda is known to operate—have entered the United States illegally. I am particularly concerned that aliens from countries such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Indonesia, and the Sudan are entering our country illegally. On March 8, 2005 I questioned FBI Director Robert Mueller during a hearing before the House Science, State, Justice, Commerce Appropriations Subcommittee about SIAs entering the United States across the southern border and he testified under oath that this was in fact occurring. Specifically, he stated that "[t]he FBI has received reports that individuals from countries with known al-Qaeda connections have attempted to enter the U.S. illegally using alien smuggling rings and assuming Hispanic appearances. An FBI investigation into these reports continues." SIAs are changing their Arabic surnames to Hispanic surnames to elude detection and blend into the flood of illegal immigrants coming across the southern border. I am convinced that our porous borders present the most serious national security threat that America faces.

To gain a better understanding of the problems for communities and law enforcement on the border, I visited several cities along the Texas-Mexico border in October 2005. During my visit, I met with a number of sheriffs from the counties along the border. They briefed me in detail on several cases involving terrorist activity, narco-terrorist activity, violent gangs such as MS–13, and the increased violence in their counties. I was very concerned to learn about the growing influence of drug cartels in Mexico and their hired guns, the Zetas. I also learned about the violence that is spilling over into U.S. cities like Laredo, Texas. In the last year, more than 40 American citizens have been killed or kidnapped in Laredo. In early 2005, Ambassador to Mexico Tony Garza issued a travel warning for all Americans visiting or working in Mexican border towns. This warning demonstrates the need for an increased number of Border Patrol agents and local law enforcement officers on the southern border. The presence and constant activity of narco-terrorists and human smugglers are directly related to the kidnappings and the travel warning, and they signify the lawlessness along the border.

During my visit I also learned about the special status given to OTMs who enter the United States illegally. The number of OTMs apprehended along the Texas border has doubled in the last year and tripled since three years ago. Along the entire U.S.-Mexico border, the number of OTMs apprehended has increased 175 percent in the last year. The OTM problem is compounded by current policies that allow them to walk free after being detained and processed by the Border Patrol. OTMs are released because there is not enough jail space to detain them. Last week, Secretary Chertoff announced his intention to detain and deport every OTM apprehended at the border. Congress must ensure that DHS has adequate detention space and manpower to accomplish this task. The OTM problem can be fixed, but it will take additional resources, policy changes, and effective deterrence.

Since returning to Washington from my trip to the border, I have spoken with many Members of Congress and shared the stories and pictures from my trip. I was not surprised to hear that many of them said they felt safer during trips to Iraq than they would have in a pickup truck on our southern border. The increased violence in towns such as Laredo is frightening. Business centers are closing down, tourism is declining, and the general population is demoralized by the level of lawlessness. I am now convinced that you do not need to go to Baghdad to see the war on terror—you can go to Laredo.

Costs of Illegal Immigration:

According to a Federation for American Immigration Reform report issued earlier this year, illegal immigrants in Texas cost the State's taxpayers more than $4.7 billion per year for education, medical care and incarceration. The annual fiscal burden amounts to roughly $725 per Texas household.

Texas public schools, like many schools around the country are overcrowded. After Hurricane Katrina, the citizens of Houston opened their doors to our neighbors in New Orleans. School districts in Harris County have taken in 14,000 students who were displaced because of the storm. Our schools are simply drowning in the number of students, and the burden on teachers and administrators is overwhelming. There are currently an estimated 319,000 children of illegal immigrants in Texas schools. This figure represents 10 percent of the total K–12 public school enrollment in Texas and the costs of educating these children has increased every year over the last ten years. In 1994 the Urban Institute estimated the per student cost of a K–12 education in Texas was $4,461. A 2000 report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimated that the cost of educating the children of illegal immigrants was $6,288 per child. Since public school outlays have increased at least 10 percent since 2000, using the NCES data, it is reasonable to assume that the cost of educating a child of an illegal immigrant is $7,450 for this year. Education is paid for by property taxes in Texas. These taxes have reached an artificially high level and the Texas Legislature is looking for a solution to lower property taxes while continuing to provide public education that meets the standards set by No Child Left Behind. A solution can be found to the education crisis in Texas, but we cannot continue to bear the burden of educating the children of illegal immigrants.

In March 2005, the Houston Chronicle reported that "Over the past 10 years, the [Harris county hospital] district has provided $510 million in unreimbursed care to illegal immigrants." In the last three years alone, the Harris County hospital district has spent $330 million on care to illegal immigrants. Providing these services places a huge and unnecessary strain on taxpayers and creates an incentive for illegal aliens to come to this country and take advantage of the world's best hospitals. These costs are staggering and are only going to increase. In order to remove the burden from local taxpayers, Congress must continue to reimburse hospitals for this care, but to receive reimbursement for illegal immigrant care—hospitals must prove they have treated these aliens. In contrast to their unwillingness to provide information to federal immigration officials about illegal aliens for immigration purposes, states and localities have been willing to provide that information when seeking reimbursement from the federal government for the cost of medical care to illegal immigrants. Since hospitals are already asking the citizenship status of patients when they receive care, it seems reasonable that they contact federal immigration officials to alert them to the presence of these aliens. A program can easily be implemented that places no undue burden on hospitals and only requires cooperation with federal officials to be eligible for reimbursement.

I am also concerned that "sanctuary" policies implemented by local law enforcement that harbors criminals and makes immigrant communities much more susceptible to violence and crime. The City of Houston has such a policy:

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 500–05

> Officers shall not make inquires as the citizenship status of any person, nor will officers detain or arrest persons solely on the belief that they are in this country illegally. Officers will contact the Immigration and Naturalization Service regarding a person only if that person is arrested on a separate criminal charge other than a class C misdemeanor and the officer knows the prisoner is an illegal alien.

General Order 500–05 provides a safe haven for criminals to hide among immigrants. In 1998, Dr. Claudia Benton was beaten, raped, and fatally stabbed in Houston by Angel Maturion Resendiz. Resendiz, also known as the Railway Killer, entered the U.S. illegally at least seven times in 1998 and had been deported seven

times prior to the murder. On January 26, 2004, 18 year old Virginia Garcia was raped and murdered by David Diaz Morales in Austin, which has a police policy similar to the one in Houston. Morales, an illegal immigrant, had been previously arrested for child molestation. Many who support sanctuary policies claim that immigrants would be unwilling to contact local police if they were the victims of a crime out of fear that they themselves would be deported. That fear is nothing compared to the fear and resentment the families of Dr. Benton and Ms. Garcia have knowing that the murders of their loved ones could have been prevented simply by removing another barrier of communication between local and Federal law enforcement. Every community would benefit from taking criminals off the streets, and immigrant communities would benefit from not having criminals hiding among them. If Houston, or any other city, continues to receive Federal money for detaining illegal aliens, they should also be required to report illegal immigrants to DHS.

I have heard an overwhelming plea from my constituents demanding that the federal government secure our borders and enforce immigration laws. My constituents feel the pressures of illegal immigration on their pocketbooks. They are tired of paying high property taxes to fund the education of illegal immigrants' children. They are tired of increased county taxes to provide health care to people who are not in this country legally. They are tired of criminals wandering their streets with no fear of prosecution because of policies established by police that allow them to hide among the population. Fortunately, my constituents have not experienced the level of violence that I witnessed in Laredo. The southern border is truly the frontlines of the war on terror because of the threat posed by al-Qaeda and criminal organizations. Mr. Chairman, with your help and the help of this Subcommittee, I hope that we can find a solution that will protect our borders and provide reasonable reimbursements to communities that are suffocating from the costs associated with illegal immigration.

Thank you very much and I would be happy to answer any questions.

EDITORIALS SUPPORTING COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND THE SECURE AMERICA AND ORDERLY IMMIGRATION ACT OF 2005, SUBMITTED BY THE HONORABLE LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

As of Nov. 1, there have been 153 editorials supporting comprehensive immigration reform and/or the Secure America Orderly Immigration Act in 74 publications in 31 states.

To embrace and uphold our tradition as a nation of immigrants.

Editorials Supporting Comprehensive Immigration Reform and The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 Updated November 3, 2005

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ALBANY HERALD (GA): Katrina effects other priorities 09/09
September 9, 2005

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina has rearranged priorities in Congress for the remainder of the year, which means that legislation some members intended to introduce will be set aside temporarily.

However, one subject that becomes even more critical is illegal immigrants, especially those coming across the border with Mexico.

Late last month, a man the nation has seen in the news often in the last 10 days expressed support for trying to find a resolution to the flood of foreigners coming into the United States. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said in August, "The American public is rightly distressed about a situation in which they feel we do not have the proper control over our borders."

My, is that an understatement?

His comment comes at the end of a summer of much discontent — displayed most prominently in New Mexico and Arizona. Elected officials and other citizens in those two states are fed up with cities along the borders being overrun with people who mostly are Hispanic, but they appear to be of many nationalities. Governors in New Mexico and Arizona declared a state emergency in border counties in August and designated $2 million for law enforcement efforts in those specific areas toward curbing crimes, including murders, kidnappings, drug smuggling and human trafficking.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wants the power to make the same declaration in his state. Among the best of immigration ideas that were to surface in Congress this fall comes one from Sen. John McCain of Arizona. He wants to intensify border security, including setting up many more cameras, while establishing a guest worker program in which foreign workers could apply for two three-year visas. Illegal immigrants are not a problem for just states in the Southwest. They impact the country as a whole, beginning with the increased costs for taxpayer health care services they obtain free.

On Thursday, Congress approved an additional $51.8 billion for relief and recovery from Hurricane Katrina, bringing the total in disaster aid to $62.3 billion. It's not over. Some estimates are that the federal tab could reach $200 billion or more. This disaster will be very expensive.

And many of the uprooted storm victims will need assistance with housing, food stamps and many other government benefits for a long time. Some will get back on their feet sooner than others, but the federal government will be assisting for many years.

Because federal resources are much-needed by Americans, halting illegal crossings from the south takes on an even greater importance.

ARIZONA DAILY STAR (Tucson, AZ): An Immigration Plan That's Up to the Task 05/15
Arizona Daily Star
2005-05-15

The star's view: McCain, Kolbe and others offer a bill that contains all the elements of success - for the U.S. and for immigrants.

The challenge of illegal immigration is massive - 9 million or more men, women and children living in the shadows by virtue of a national wink and a nod.

For them, this arrangement beats the prospects they face at home, mainly the poverty of Mexico. Some, though, face death in the desert or abuse once here and few can ever hold the American Dream they help build for others.

For the United States, the arrangement fuels the economy as we know it - while corroding the credibility of our system of laws and opening us to terrorism.

Something has to be done.

Arizonans should take pride in having three lawmakers among the five-member bipartisan group introducing legislation that is finally up to the task.

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, introduced Thursday, addresses this massive challenge in a comprehensive way, with provisions that - used together - offer hope for a solution.

These include temporary visas of up to six years for illegal immigrants already in the country, three-year guest worker visas renewable once, a path for permanent residency that requires payment of fines and fees, a system to verify worker status, stiffer fines for employers who violate the law and new border security initiatives.

Still, many provisions of the plan - including the guest-worker program - can only be called grand experiments. They require quick action so we can see whether they work, but are unlikely to get it unless President Bush shifts some of his political capital from Social Security soon.

Opponents of the guest worker program call it a misnomer, insisting that once here immigrants are unlikely to go home. But ties to Mexico remain strong: Money sent from Mexicans living here to relatives in Mexico totaled more than $13 billion in 2003, the Star reported last May.

Opponents of a guest worker plan don't seem to understand the need to act. They include the 71 members of the House Immigration Reform Caucus.

They are one-trick ponies, obsessed with the infrastructure of border and workplace enforcement without concern for the forces of worker supply and demand.

They are bucking even President Bush in resisting the push for comprehensive reform, and they grow stronger.

Sponsors of this legislation - Sens. John McCain and Ted Kennedy, Arizona Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake, and Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Illinois - say effective immigration reform addresses the needs of the nation as well as the immigrants.

Fortunately, they've developed a plan that recognizes these interests have much in common.

ARIZONA DAILY STAR (Tucson, AZ): Immigration reform: getting it done 07/10
July 10, 2005

One immigration bill now before Congress addresses all the factors that must be dealt with to ensure national security, a stable work force and the welfare of immigrants. The bipartisan Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act is awaiting a hearing date, which may be set as early as this week. Here is a breakdown of the bill:

Border security

Requires the development of a National Strategy for Border Security, empanels a Border Security Advisory Committee from the border regions and requires the Homeland Security and State departments to develop and coordinate intelligence and technology among all parties engaged in border security - here and in Mexico, Canada and Central America. The technology component includes an emphasis on aerial surveillance.

Pluses: Takes a strategic, international approach to border security, including a requirement that the United States work to secure Mexico's southern border as well as its northern border. Sets broad goals for agencies to work at on their own, with provisions for reporting to Congress.

Minuses: The author of a competing bill, Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, faulted the plan as heavy on studies. It lacks specific numbers of personnel and hardware that other plans contain. Cornyn's concerns rate serious consideration: He is chairman of the Senate Judiciary border security, immigration and citizenship subcommittee.

Our view: This bill presents the only strategic, coordinated approach to border security that has been presented so far. Up until now, resources have been allocated in a piecemeal fashion with little consideration for the role Mexico can play.

New workers

Prospective immigrants find jobs and apply for a new type of visa known as H-5A. It requires a $500 fee, application costs, and security, medical and other checks. It is good for three years, so long as the holder remains employed, and can be renewed once for another three years. It is portable, so if the worker loses a job, he or she has 60 days to find another or return home. At the end of the visa period, the worker returns home or is in the pipeline for permanent resident status. Bill grants visas to workers' immediate families, and allows visa holders to visit outside the United States.

Pluses: Good for workers because it encourages them to enter the country legally. Good for the United States because it ties each immigrant to a specific job.

Minuses: Two big questions. First, will workers return home at the end of their legal stay here, and how many of the visas will be required to satisfy the demand from Mexico and other countries? Opponents of such "guest worker" proposals say they are a misnomer, that workers once here are unlikely to return to the poverty of their home countries. The bill sets the number of visas at 400,000 in the first year, to be adjusted up or down based on future demand.

Our view: Combined with a reliable identification system, this provision holds great hope for stemming the growth of the shadow class of illegal workers in the United States. Workers and jobs will be linked in the

open. Collecting fees, now often paid to smugglers, will help offset costs of the program later and give workers a financial stake in obeying the laws. Serious immigration reform will require some risks like this.

Illegal workers

People living illegally in the United States register for a temporary H-5B visa, good for up to six years. They must meet all the requirements of guest workers entering the country for the first time - plus provide a work history here or show they're in school. They qualify for permanent resident status by undergoing further checks, meeting a future work requirement, meeting English and civics requirements, and paying a fine of $2,000 or more per adult.

Pluses: Deals head-on with the most contentious part of immigration reform. Provides incentive for workers here illegally to come forward. Creates a pool of potentially billions of dollars to help offset costs of the program in the future.

Minuses: It smacks of amnesty, which many self-proclaimed advocates of immigration reform - including President Bush - call a deal-breaker for any plan. Many critics of this provision say it rewards criminals. The Cornyn plan, co-sponsored by Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona, requires illegal immigrants to go home before they can be considered for permanent resident status.

Our view: This provision or something like it is the key to meaningful immigration reform. Unless Congress finds a way to draw more than 10 million illegal immigrants out of the shadows, no other component of reform can be expected to succeed. Few other suggestions have been made for accomplishing this. We hope those with the rigid view that illegal immigrants are criminals will consider those numbers and ask themselves how we got here. The answer is an unofficial U.S. policy that beckons illegal workers to jobs that only they will do even as our government struggles unsuccessfully to keep them out.

Circular movement

Requires foreign countries to enter agreements with the United States to control the flow of workers here and encourage their return home. Encourages U.S. government to partner with Mexico in developing its economy and reduce the pressure to emigrate illegally.

Pluses: Trying to shift some of the burden on the countries that send us illegal immigrants might work if it's part of an overall strategy such as this. Proponents of the bill say most immigrants come here seeking money to use back home, not to start a new life in a foreign land.

Minuses: This provision puts the "comprehensive" in comprehensive reform, with a segment that lays out a simple plan for the recovery of the Mexican economy. This certainly is the long-term answer to immigration reform. But if all it took was an act of Congress, it would already be done.

Our view: It's worth a try.

Enforcement

The Social Security Administration and Homeland Security would work to create a new electronic system for verifying that applicants are eligible for work. It replaces a slow, paper-based system now used. Visas would use biometrics at first, such as retina scans, and perhaps simple card swipes later - like credit cards. Designates the Labor Department as investigator of businesses suspected of employing illegal immigrants.

Pluses: Establishes a rigorous process using modern technology to guard against fraud and streamline a system that will process millions of people.

Minuses: None we can see.

Our view: Certainty about an applicant's identification and qualifications will give the system credibility. Proponents say it may take the first steps toward a national identification card for all Americans, which may become necessary - in part - to distinguish noncitizens from citizens and avoid immigration fraud.

• **To learn more about this bill,** visit www.thomas.loc.gov and enter the name - Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act. Let your representatives know what you think by contacting them through www.house.gov or www.senate.gov

ARIZONA DAILY STAR (Tucson, AZ): All cards on the table now for border reform 07/20
July 20, 2005

The star's view: With a bill introduced by Sen. Kyl, hearings are finally scheduled on crafting a new immigration policy. It's what Arizona has waited for.

Now it can begin - a serious discussion of comprehensive immigration reform with the promise of stopping deaths in the desert, stabilizing the American work force and restoring the rule of law.

If there were any doubt that Congress was waiting for Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl before moving forward, consider this: A week to the day after he announced his plan, with fellow Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, the first hearing will finally be held.

The setting is the Senate Judiciary committee, whose members include both men. On the agenda will be Kyl-Cornyn as well as another approach to the same problem - the McCain-Kennedy bill introduced in May by another Arizonan, Sen. John McCain.

How much attention immigration reform receives might depend on another issue looming before the same committee - the nomination of a Supreme Court candidate to replace Sandra Day O'Connor of Arizona.

Leaders in Congress already have said they doubt a vote will come this year on immigration reform. And while the competing Senate bills address very similar challenges, they do so in conflicting ways. Still, you can hear advocates of reform rubbing their hands at the chance to get moving.

Even U.S. Rep. Jeff Flake, a Mesa Republican and co-sponsor of McCain-Kennedy, had kind words about the competing bill Tuesday: "It's clear that momentum for congressional action this year is growing."

Kyl had signaled the intent of his bill long before Tuesday, emphasizing enforcement as the leading component and drawing a line in the desert sand against anything that resembles amnesty for people here illegally. The bill turns out to be as good as his word, mandating the hiring of 11,250 new officers and requiring foreign workers to return home each time they wish to gain or renew legal residency.

The Kyl-Cornyn bill is inferior in many ways. It provides little incentive to come forward for the illegal immigrants already here - more than 10 million by the Census Bureau's count, up to 20 million in Kyl's statement.

McCain-Kennedy offers them a path to permanent residency in the belief that most will return home eventually and are merely stuck here because we've hardened the border against their return. This path is too arduous - requiring fines, fees, evidence of a job and civics proficiency - to be described as amnesty. Still, that's what critics are calling it.

Kyl-Cornyn seeks to lure people out of the shadows with this promise: Come forward and be deported, but rest assured you can go to the front of the line when you try to come back. Many questions remain about how this provision will jibe with existing laws that bar certain illegal immigrants from returning for three years, 10 years, even a lifetime. Rather than luring people to register, Kyl-Cornyn may force a massive national roundup.

On the issue of enforcement, Kyl-Cornyn goes overboard. Hiring a slug of new officers comes straight from an earlier Intelligence Reform bill, but it throws bodies more than answers at the problem. The Border Patrol

has said it can't train and deploy all these agents in a timely fashion. Tucson Sector Chief Michael Nicley, in an interview earlier this year, told the Star that manpower alone can't do the job. He needs better technology.

Still, there are obvious openings for compromise in the two bills. Both, in fact, set six years as the maximum period for a temporary visa. But progress will require a level of cooperation we haven't yet seen from this Congress. Perhaps if two Arizona Republicans can come to agreement, the rest of the nation can, too.

- *D.J.*

ARIZONA DAILY STAR (Tucson, AZ): Bush's worker plan should push Congress to act 09/23

The star's view: While not perfect, the president's plan includes a necessary provision that would allow guest workers legal entry into the country.

Published: 09.23.2005

President Bush has come up with a realistic immigration reform plan with elements similar to the one pushed by some of the Arizona congressional delegation.

Bush's plan has not been publicly unveiled, but several key lawmakers - some from Arizona - were briefed last week by the president's top adviser, Karl Rove.

Among the more important provisions is a proposal to allow illegal entrants already here to apply for a three-year guest-worker visa. After the first three years, the workers could apply for another three-year worker visa.

After that, they would have to leave the country. From Mexico or their home countries, they would initiate a process of returning.

The president has released a trial balloon, knowing he can no longer ignore an issue that was at the top of his agenda before the 9/11 attacks - but knowing also that many conservative Republicans will oppose any move to accommodate the 11 million or more immigrants already here illegally.

He is caught between these hard-liners, one-trick ponies who see enforcement as the only answer, and another pillar of Republican power - the business interests whose customers have come to rely on the lower costs that immigrant labor provides.

This plan appears to be a departure from one the president floated only a couple of weeks ago. That plan called for deportation of illegal workers who arrived here after February 2004.

The Arizona congressmen who spoke with Rove never used the word "deportation" in their accounts. Nor did they speak of "amnesty," a description that Sen. John McCain and others are taking pains to reject as they push for provisions allowing illegal entrants to stay.

These lawmakers seemed impressed with the details of what they heard.

The issue is ripe for corrective legislation and has been for a long time. Arizona, especially, has suffered as a direct result of a border enforcement policy that shut down illegal entry routes in California to the west and in Texas to the east. Illegal entrants now favor the Arizona desert, so vast and porous that they can evade detection but so hot and rugged that it makes their trek more dangerous.

Border enforcement isn't working. Illegal entrants looking for jobs continue to stream in by the hundreds of thousands. It doesn't take much imagination to see terrorists can follow the same routes.

The best solution is bipartisan legislation sponsored by McCain, the Arizona Republican, and Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., among others. It is truly comprehensive, providing for tougher enforcement, temporary worker visas and a clear and strict path to citizenship for immigrants already here and those coming later.

The Rove discussion shows the president's ideas are consistent with the goals of McCain-Kennedy, if different in the details. Creating a process for controlling immigration would ease enforcement pressures,

acknowledge the need for cheap labor and provide safer and cheaper ways for workers to get into the country.

With the president and Congress spreading their attentions thin on rebuilding efforts on the Gulf Coast and in Iraq, and on the nominations of two Supreme Court justices, it is heartening to see such high-level attention emerging.

We're convinced Congress and the president have the resources and the ability to address immigration in the midst of these other challenges. Many issues now facing the nation are urgent. None is more important than immigration.

- *M.H.*

ARIZONA DAILY STAR (Tucson, AZ): It's not 'amnesty' when the law is a shambles 10/31
The Star's view: It's not only practical but fair to let illegal immigrants remain here in pursuit of permanent status. They are not criminals in need of pardon.

October 31, 2005

In the interest of protecting one thread in the tapestry of America, we threaten to unravel many others.

Congressional Republicans are taking up the cause of comprehensive immigration reform, finally driven by growing concerns about their paramount issue - national security. In ignoring the broader issue for so long, the nation's leaders have allowed the population of illegal immigrants to grow to the size of Ohio, 11 million people by the most reliable estimates.

What to do with this population, more so than how high the fence will be or how to admit new immigrants, is likely to drive the debate over immigration reform.

One side of the issue has dug in its heels so deeply that the prospects for meaningful compromise are fading. This position holds that these 11 million people, a conservative figure but one that still represents nearly 4 percent of the U.S. population, must be sent home first if they wish to return.

The practical arguments against such an approach should carry the day on their own. First, a population that has lived successfully in the shadows of America is unlikely to step forward and risk losing the benefits it has enjoyed. Strict enforcement now of existing laws raises the specter of a national roundup with overtones of ethnic cleansing. More important for Americans, economic chaos may result; this group makes up a sizable portion of the nation's work force, doing jobs that Americans have shown they don't want to do.

Practical considerations, though, take a back seat to the rule of law, say the most strident defenders of our borders, including Arizona junior Sen. Jon Kyl, sponsor of one comprehensive reform bill. "No amnesty" is their mantra. Even those who would allow illegal workers to stay, including Arizona senior Sen. John McCain, take pains to distance themselves from the "A" word. McCain notes that the bill he sponsors would make illegal immigrants pay what amounts to a criminal fine first if they wish to remain.

But beyond the practical considerations is a simple question of fairness, an ideal woven throughout America's system of laws.

"Amnesty" is entirely the wrong word for any plan that would allow illegal immigrants to remain in this country. Amnesty is a pardon for political offenses, according to Webster's New World Dictionary, and the offense in this case is difficult to recognize. People who cross our borders without the proper paperwork do indeed violate the federal code. They are judged guilty by the thousands every week, usually through the rump court of practicality administered directly by the Border Patrol.

But 11 million people do not establish themselves as an integral part of a national economy without the tacit approval of society as a whole. Businesses willingly hire illegal labor to save money; they can fend off blame, thanks to a system of enforcement that is broken. For their part, consumers reap the benefits of cheap and illegal labor without complaint.

A law unenforced carries no weight. It is, arguably, no law at all. And yet 11th-hour fidelity to a rule that's in shambles has become the line in the sand for false reformers such as Kyl. They should, instead, for reasons of fairness as well as practicality, recognize the history that brought these partners to the place we share today.

Comprehensive immigration reform will restore the rule of law, preserve a sound economy and pull people out of the shadows of a Third World within our own country - one lacking in many basic human rights.

These changes can only occur if we stop viewing illegal immigrants as criminals angling for a pardon.

- *D.J.*

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Sanity, not amnesty 05/13
McCain and Kennedy bring sense, not rhetoric, to immigration
May. 13, 2005 12:00 AM

Any jackass can kick down a barn, but it takes a good carpenter to build one.

- Lyndon B. Johnson

This isn't about amnesty.

The bill introduced Thursday by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., is a bipartisan move toward immigration reform that has the support of business and immigrant rights groups.

It reflects the realities - not the rhetoric - of illegal immigration. It shows respect for human dignity, family values and national security. It also recognizes current and future labor needs.

This bill includes border security measures. It seeks to get Mexico to accept responsibility for medical care for migrants, as well as joining in multinational efforts to prevent illegal immigration.

The proposal recognizes future labor needs in the United States by creating an expanded guest-worker program.

It increases employer sanctions for hiring the undocumented, and calls for establishing a secure identification system so those sanctions can be imposed. The lack of such an identification system makes the employer sanctions in current law nearly impossible to enforce.

The focus of congressional debate should be on how to make that identification system reliable, fair and compatible with a free society.

The debate should be about how to structure an efficient process so that would-be migrants abandon the criminal smugglers they now employ and embrace the legal option.

The focus should be on making this reform plan better.

Unfortunately, the debate is being defined by those who kick about "amnesty," but offer nothing constructive on which to build immigration reform.

Yes, the bill aims to lure the current undocumented immigrant population into the light.

But in order to achieve guest-worker status, these immigrants have to pay a stiff fine and back taxes. They also have to demonstrate a good work history and pass a background check.

They don't go to the head of anybody's line, either. Undocumented immigrants who are granted guest-worker status will have to wait much longer to apply for legal residency than those who come legally through the guest-worker program the bill establishes.

Although the bill provides for family unification, it may actually lessen the migration of family members to this country by allowing guest workers to travel back and forth across the border to visit family members.

The current emphasis on border enforcement has made such trips so expensive and risky that migrants often pay smugglers to bring their spouses and children here to live with them.

The carrot of legalization is essential to get the undocumented population - estimated at as many as 11 million people - to come forward and be counted.

Lifting the vast majority of migrants out of this shadow population and into regulated status will deny cover to criminals or terrorists who hide among them. It's about national security, and it's something the current system does not serve.

Border enforcement alone can never succeed without a mechanism to bring willing workers to the employers who need their labor. The buildup of Border Patrol agents during the 1990s was a costly failure that led to increased deaths along the border while illegal immigration also increased.

It is time to embrace a comprehensive policy that moves would-be workers to the ports of entry while allowing Border Patrol agents to focus their energies on stopping drug smugglers and other criminals.

This is about national security, not amnesty. This is about humane border policies, not amnesty. This is about the needs of this nation's economy, not amnesty.

In the House of Representatives, Arizona Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake, both Republicans, and Illinois Rep. Luis Gutierrez, a Democrat, have joined McCain and Kennedy to offer a plan to build sane immigration policy.

It's the constructive approach.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Below the belt 07/21

Congressional delay on border reforms is a sucker punch for Arizona and for the nation
Jul. 21, 2005 12:00 AM

We've been sucker-punched.

When Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist deemed it unlikely that Congress would pass a major immigration reform bill this year, Arizona took a hard shot to the solar plexus.

This state has provided real leadership on the issue. The bipartisan guest-worker legislation offered by Arizona's Sen. John McCain and Massachusetts' Ted Kennedy is a pragmatic approach that addresses immigration reform as a law enforcement, human rights, economic and national security issue.

That bill has been waiting as Congress wallowed in denial.

Years of federal inaction have resulted in a population of undocumented immigrants estimated at 10 million. The out-of-control border not only brings workers to employers who gladly hire them, it provides cover for terrorists who want to slip in unnoticed.

Instead of embracing responsibility at long last, Frist offers this: Maybe next year.

A breathtaking, heartbreaking assessment considering that next year is an election year; that was the excuse for not tackling this issue in 2004.

Arizona took the punch and staggered to its feet with yet another proposal to fix the broken federal system.

Jon Kyl, Arizona's junior senator, offered a bill this week with Texas Sen. John Cornyn that also seeks to move the immigration debate forward.

This proposal wisely puts more emphasis on workplace enforcement. Illegal immigration will stop only when employers stop hiring undocumented immigrants.

But the measure's approach to the current undocumented population is unrealistic. Under the McCain-Kennedy approach, those working here illegally could remain after paying a fine. This provides a needed incentive for people to identify themselves, and it keeps the workforce in place.

The Kyl-Cornyn bill requires undocumented immigrants to sign up for a "mandatory departure" program. They could then remain for up to five years but would have to leave at the end of that time.

Many members of the undocumented population have been living here for most of their adult lives. They have families and social ties. They are unlikely to step forward into deportation.

The Kyl-Cornyn bill lands somewhere between the McCain-Kennedy approach and a highly punitive measure being offered by Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colo., which, among other things, makes it a felony to be in the country illegally.

Kyl and Cornyn have scheduled a hearing on their bill before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday. That would be a good time to begin a debate that should include the McCain-Kennedy approach.

It's time Senate leadership gave them the support they need to move ahead. The same week Frist was
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delivering his gloomy prognosis on immigration reform, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff called for an expanded guest-worker program and increased border enforcement for the sake of national security.

As Chertoff recognizes - even if the Republican leadership of Congress does not - illegal immigration is a serious national concern. Congress needs to deal with it now.

Offering excuses for delay is a sucker punch that does more than take the wind out of Arizona - it affects the entire nation.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Speak up, Mr. President 07/27

White House can't stay silent as immigration debate warms up

Wednesday, July 27, 2005

It was the first major congressional debate in years about a problem that is international in scope and raises serious national security concerns.

Illegal immigration also holds more heat than an asphalt parking lot and cries out for some cool national leadership.

Arizona's two Republican senators, Jon Kyl and John McCain, were there Tuesday to make the case for their separate and competing reform packages.

The Bush White House was AWOL.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao were supposed to testify at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on comprehensive immigration reform. The Bush administration withdrew their names, without much explanation.

Sen. Arlen Specter, the committee chairman, complained that he "wanted to hear" what the Bush administration's program is, according to Billy House, The Republic's Washington reporter.

Specter wasn't the only one disappointed.

The nation turns frustrated eyes toward the president for some leadership.

It has been more than two years since Bush said a guest-worker program would be a good way to bring willing workers from outside the country to employers who wanted to hire them.

Since then, the bipartisan team of Sens. McCain and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass. have come up with a promising proposal.

Arizona Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake, both Republicans, are involved in this worthwhile effort that deals realistically with the illegal immigrant population currently living here.

Kyl and Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas recently announced a different approach.

There is plenty to talk about.

The level of illegal immigration to the United States today "represents a threat to our national security, to our economy, to our health care system, and to our state and local government budgets," McCain told the committee.

It is also a "humanitarian crisis," he said.

The Bush administration should have joined that discussion Tuesday.

It's a discussion that should have begun years ago, as the Arizona desert was claiming the lives of increasing

numbers of illegal border crossers and the number of undocumented immigrants living in this country was climbing toward 11 million.

Congress is finally beginning to do its job.

But Bush has yet to offer more than broad outlines on how to reform a shattered immigration policy.

This incendiary issue will not be solved without presidential leadership.

According to a story in Sunday's Los Angeles Times, White House strategists say Bush is planning to make immigration a top priority this fall by putting together a coalition made up of advocacy groups and business interests that rely on immigrant labor.

They will be asked to pony up $50,000 to $250,000 for a media campaign to support a program of increased border security and a guest-worker component, the Times said.

Congress, not paid political announcements, is the mechanism ordained by our form of government to discuss and deal with national issues.

Members of Congress, notably Arizona's two senators, have met with business and advocacy groups and crafted solutions that deserve to be debated.

The Senate Judiciary Committee started the process Tuesday.

The Bush administration should have been there.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Border inertia 08/14

Real reforms stuck in the sand while belated technical tweaks are hailed
Sunday, August 14, 2005
Here's the hallmark of U.S. immigration policy: failing to act despite overwhelming evidence of the need for action.

That is illustrated by the announcement last week that the Department of Homeland Security wants you to see as "good news" a story about putting technology to work on America's borders.

On one level, it is good news. Two Arizona ports of entry were among five nationwide that launched a pilot radio-tracking system to keep tabs on foreign visitors through tags on immigration documents.

Being able to track who enters and when, or whether visitors exit is important to national security and to efforts to curb illegal immigration.

That's especially true considering that a great many undocumented immigrants did not enter the country illegally, they merely overstayed their visas.

Moving toward a system that makes such visa violations easy to identify is good news, indeed.

Yet the border-crossing changes announced by Homeland Security represent the early stages of a system that was supposed to be well on the way to completion by now.

In 1996, a check in/check out system was mandated by Congress. Concerns about cost and convenience, along with the inertia of complacency, delayed things.

In 2000, Congress reiterated the need and set a Dec. 31, 2005, target for completion.

Now we have Washington lauding a pilot program that runs into next year.

Sadly, the pilot might not even be under way if it hadn't been for the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

It took disaster to spur action.

Now we come to another area of inertia.

U.S. immigration laws and policies are dangerously obsolete. But it has long been more convenient for Congress to delay action on this controversial topic, despite the fact that Arizona Sens. John McCain and Jon Kyl and Reps. Jim Kolbe, Jeff Flake and Raul Grijalva are among those who have offered reform plans.

As the illegal immigration population grows (now at 11 million by some estimates) real crises are brewing in this country on many fronts, from the increasing number of deaths of undocumented immigrants in Arizona's deserts to the increasing bitterness and polarization surrounding the issue.

Comprehensive immigration reform is essential to establishing an orderly system for guest workers to enter and work in the country, and for undocumented immigrants currently here to be identified and tracked.

It will take crossing party lines, standing up for what's right and putting the nation's best interests ahead of politics to achieve real reform.

It's not easy. And, unfortunately, it's not how immigration issues are usually handled.

But it beats waiting for disaster.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Talk is cheap 08/28
Our president must step up on immigration action

Aug. 28, 2005 12:00 AM

President Bush is coming to Arizona on Monday.

Arizona needs to speak to him in a firm voice.

The message is this: We're tired of waiting.

And this: Your job description includes solving our problem.

Our state is the busiest illegal immigration crossing point in the nation.

The majority of the 1.1 million people who were arrested last year for crossing the border illegally were caught in Arizona. Summer after summer, increasing numbers of people die trying to make that crossing.

Waves of illegal immigrants swamp local law enforcement and medical services in communities that border Mexico. Criminal smugglers feed like sharks on public safety and peace of mind.

Border communities pay the price because the federal government lacks an enforceable immigration policy. Pima County, which isn't even directly on the border, is seeking grants to haul off the trash left behind by undocumented immigrants as they are loaded into smugglers' cars for the trip into metropolitan areas. In a single day, the county hauled four trailer loads of backpacks, discarded clothing and similar trash.

It's that bad.

It's been that bad for a long, long time.

The feds have been stonewalling for a long, long time.

Gov. Janet Napolitano and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson made national headlines recently when each declared a state of emergency along the border.

Finally, someone in Washington woke up.

Last week, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff acknowledged the perils faced by border states. He sent a letter to Napolitano outlining a plan to crack down on human smugglers and to enhance border training for Arizona Highway Patrol officers.

It was good press.

But talk is not what Arizona needs. Chertoff knows that. But unlike the president, he doesn't have the bully pulpit from which to shout it.

Chertoff pointed out that what's needed is comprehensive immigration reform. Several years ago, the president, too, called for a guest-worker program as part of a comprehensive plan.

Yet the president hasn't pushed for such a plan. Nor has he given much support to those who are sticking

their political necks out to offer solutions.

In July, for example, the administration's top two people on this issue - Chertoff and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao - ducked out of congressional hearings on two different immigration reform bills. One of those bills is by Arizona Sen. John McCain and the other by Arizona's Sen. Jon Kyl.

The administration is supposedly working on its own immigration reform.

Arizona wants to see it.

Arizona wants some action from the president this state helped elect.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Action, please 08/30
Bush's soothing words on immigration just not enough
Aug. 30, 2005 12:00 AM

President Bush spoke soothing words to Arizona on Monday about illegal immigration, and he hinted at the kind of bipartisanship it will take to fix this mess.

Arizona should hold him to the promise and start modeling the bipartisanship.

During a stop in El Mirage, Bush said: "It's important for the people of this state to understand, your voices are being heard in Washington, D.C."

It's about time.

One of the loudest voices has been that of Gov. Janet Napolitano, who recently declared a state of emergency to help border counties deal with the crushing costs of illegal immigration. Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico, also a Democrat, did the same.

The Republican president pledged to help these Democrat leaders. Such bipartisanship is the only way to deal with this issue.

Immigration has long been reduced to sound bites and used to leverage votes. With state and national elections next year, politicians will be tempted to continue that divisive, self-serving strategy.

Tough choices and political courage do not blossom in that climate. Bush, who doesn't have to worry about re-election, can keep things on a higher plane. He has the biggest microphone in the country.

Arizona Sen. John McCain and Massachusetts Sen. Edward Kennedy forged a promising bipartisan plan for immigration reform, but few others have been able rise above partisan politics.

Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl, who was with the president Monday, also has a reform plan that is co-sponsored by Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas. It appears to be gaining strong support in the House of Representatives.

Both of these plans offer good ideas. But neither has received a presidential push.

Bush said Monday that Kyl was going to work closely with the administration. We hope that includes McCain and the Democrats, such as Kennedy, as well.

Bush's acknowledgement that border enforcement is a federal responsibility may seem like a "Well, duh!" moment. But it is key to progress. Arizona and other states have suffered deep economic and social wounds because of the federal failure to accept that duty.

Bush spoke the truth.

Now he has to act on it.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Wrong dosage 10/05

Hayworth immigration bill lacks reality, humanity

Oct. 5, 2005 12:00 AM

There are tough, realistic ideas being discussed to curb illegal immigration.

J.D. Hayworth's "Enforcement First" bill falls into the "unrealistic" category.

His approach is to halt illegal immigration through border enforcement and rid the country of illegal workers by making their daily lives so miserable that they go home.

If illegal immigrants were discouraged by discomfort, they wouldn't have made a treacherous journey that claimed the lives of 248 people in the Arizona desert in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

If enforcement alone could stop illegal immigration, the huge increases in expenditures to stop illegal border crossings would have led to less illegal immigration.

It hasn't.

Before we go any further, let's make one thing clear: This newspaper has long been - and remains - opposed to illegal immigration. We want it stopped.

The immigration policies of this country are beyond just being broken; they create situations that are dangerous to national security, financially ruinous for border communities and deadly for migrants who come here in search of jobs.

There really isn't much of an argument about the need to fix this.

But without a dose of realism, immigration policies cannot be fixed. Without a dose of humanity, a fix won't be worthy of a nation built on respect for human dignity.

Hayworth's bill fails on both counts.

He rejects a guest-worker plan. But the need of business for migrant labor, and the current difficulties businesses face in discerning whose papers are forged and whose are legitimate, is the force behind illegal immigration. Given the low unemployment rate in this country, the aging of the workforce and the increasing educational level of American workers, the need for these low-skilled workers cannot be ignored.

Hayworth's approach also needs a reality check when it comes to the illegal immigrants currently living here. He relies on tough workplace enforcement to rout them out of jobs, something that ignores the importance of these workers to the economy. He also puts local law enforcement to work as immigration cops, something that would further drive vulnerable people underground and make them reluctant to report crime.

It is true that illegal immigrants broke U.S. immigration laws to get here. But if the U.S. economy had not provided jobs to lure them, they would not have come. And if that workforce disappeared tomorrow, the U.S. economy would suffer.

A more realistic and humane approach comes from Sen. John McCain and Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake.

They have a proposal that provides incentives for undocumented workers to step forward, pay a fine and remain temporarily on the job. Their approach also creates a system for bringing in new workers for jobs that are not filled by Americans.

Sen. Jon Kyl offers another approach that also deals with the need for the current and future workforce.

Hayworth got one thing completely right. Tough workplace enforcement is essential to discourage illegal immigration. A system that enables business to reliably check immigration status must be in place to ensure the success of any guest-worker program.

On the whole, though, Hayworth's bill is a distraction from the realistic approaches currently awaiting action in Congress.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phonex, AZ): Bitter harvest 10/16

Our hypocritical border policies are filling up the morgues in Pima County
Oct. 16, 2005 12:00 AM

Look for the fruits of America's immigration policy at the Pima County morgue.

That's where they took the body of 43-year-old Miguel Hernandez. He was one of 248 people who died trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona between Oct. 1, 2004 and Sept. 30, 2005.

In December, 40-year-old Raul Avelar-Martinez was taken to the Cochise County morgue. So was 19-year-old Leticia Viveros-Tobilla.

Rolando Estrada Lamas, age 35, went to the Tucson morgue.

So did Estela Tenorio, age 21, and José Nicolas Francisco, age 15.

Luis Martinez Lorenzana, age 12, arrived in July. (That's the month the Pima County medical examiner ran out of space and had to rent a refrigerated truck in which to store bodies.)

Border deaths broke records again this fiscal year as men, women and children ran out of luck on the way to jobs or families in the United States.

This is the fruit of America's immigration policy. This is a harvest unworthy of a nation built on respect for human life and dignity.

There are those who dismiss the death along the border. They say the dead were breaking U.S. laws and deserved what they got. Even the 12-year-old.

But the laws that were broken are only half-respected in this country. The current immigration policy is a farce that acts tough at the border and looks the other way at the workplace.

That isn't an accident. It's because politicians have long known that America needs immigrant labor, but long feared saying so because anti-immigrant forces have big soapboxes.

Those who scream that to stop illegal immigration we need only to close the border and enforce laws against hiring the undocumented are peddling snake oil. This is a lot more complex than the sound-bite shouters would have you believe.

Thomas Nassif and Timothy Chelling understand some of the complexities. They are president and vice president, respectively, of Irvine, Calif.-based Western Growers, one of the largest farming associations in the country.

Nassif and Chelling made the rounds to the biggest papers in the state's two largest metropolitan areas last week with a message of frustration and desperation.

"We don't have enough workers in this country to harvest the crops," Nassif said. He added an obvious fact that gets overlooked by those who use the words "illegal immigrant" as an epithet. "This is not work that people (in this country) want to do. Nobody raises their child to be a farmworker," he said.

Enhanced border enforcement and competition for immigrant labor from higher-paying jobs in the construction industry created serious labor shortages last year in Yuma and California's Imperial Valley, Nassif says.

More problems are expected this year when Yuma's $700 million winter lettuce crop is ready. Labor shortages are causing problems for Cochise County growers who need to harvest chilies and apples.

Western Growers, which has long supported the stalled Ag-Jobs bill that would give temporary-worker status to undocumented farmworkers, is now asking the Bush administration for an emergency guest-worker program to bring in thousands of laborers for this year's harvest. It has to happen by mid-November.

Nassif says it won't cost President Bush any political capital because it's specific to this problem and offers no amnesty to any of the 11 million undocumented workers who are here. It will take some political courage, however, and that's something the president hasn't demonstrated on this issue.

A quick fix for the farmers is essential because more than just the price of lettuce may be at stake.

"Every major farmer now has foreign holdings," Nassif says. Without a reliable labor force, farmers will simply move the farms to Mexico or elsewhere.

For Arizona, where agriculture is a $6.6 billion business, outsourcing agricultural production would be quite a blow. Every farmworker job creates 3.5 other jobs, Nassif says.

The stakes for Arizona agriculture offer a glimpse into the complexities of immigration. These challenges also demonstrate the importance of a solid, comprehensive reform package built on reality, not molten rhetoric.

Such reform must include some type of legalization for the current undocumented population because those workers are needed in the workforce. People in this country don't raise their children to be busboys and maids, either.

Such a package must also include an easy-to-use guest-worker program to address the future need for low-skilled labor. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has a bill that would do these things.

McCain's bill faces the hard facts of the situation without buckling to the anti-immigrant rhetoric being sold around the country.

It also faces the shameful fact that America's immigration policies helped produce a mounting harvest of death at morgues in Southern Arizona.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): A sane policy on immigration 10/23

We need one, we don't have one, so let's get that fixed

Oct. 23, 2005 12:00 AM

The Arizona Immigration Forum offered intelligent conversation Wednesday on an issue that too often results in head-banging cacophony.

That, in itself, was an accomplishment.

The forum in Phoenix, co-sponsored by *The Arizona Republic* and ThinkAZ, a nonpartisan research group, also identified key areas of agreement:

- Illegal immigration continues despite a tenfold increase in spending on enhanced border enforcement efforts since 1986.
- An out-of-control southern border leads to myriad problems, including the deaths of migrants crossing the desert, concerns about national security, increasing disrespect for the rule of law, rise of criminal smugglers and crushing costs to border communities.
- The 11 million undocumented immigrants here represent a major challenge.
- They came here to work, and more will come as long as jobs are available.
- American businesses - especially construction, meat processing, agriculture, restaurants and hotels - depend on cheap immigrant labor.
- Jobs will be available to undocumented immigrants until employers can be held accountable for hiring them.
- Today's law makes it nearly impossible for employers to check an applicant's immigration status.
- The nation is finally noticing the problem.
- It's a federal issue, and Congress has to fix it.

Finding a solution will be easier if we keep this common ground in mind. Everybody wants a sane, workable immigration policy. Nobody thinks we have one.

Everybody is also pretty clear about the disagreement.

Some want a solution based on enforcement alone.

That's been the approach for nearly two decades. It hasn't worked.

Hiring regulations are unwieldy, unworkable

What's needed now is the addition of a mechanism that lets foreign workers fill jobs Americans don't want.

Yet some say enforcement could work if Uncle Sam began vigorously going after those who hire the

undocumented.

But the law against hiring the undocumented is unwieldy and unworkable, which helps explain why it isn't widely applied. It requires employers to ask for any of 30 different forms of identification. There's no way to tell what's authentic. Fake documents are cheap, easy to get, and some are fairly realistic looking.

Sanctioning employers who don't recognize bogus documents would be unfair. Workplace sanctions can't be pursued until employers have a fast, reliable way to check worker eligibility.

Even when such a system is created, the enforcement-only solution cannot work because it ignores the needs of business. Americans are increasingly well educated and they do not raise their children to be farmworkers, chicken pluckers or hotel maids.

That's why comprehensive immigration reform has to include a guest-worker program. We favor a plan like the one sponsored by Sen. John McCain and Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake, all Arizona Republicans. It includes a path to permanent residency, which is important because people are better neighbors if they have a real stake in the long-term success of the community.

Many guest workers will return to their home country with new skills and capital to build a better life. But those who have worked hard and want to remain ought to have an opportunity to do so.

And those who have been working here illegally?

They represent one of the most divisive issues in the immigration debate.

There is a strong sentiment that these people should not be "rewarded" for breaking immigration laws. We agree. However, there is also widespread agreement that massive deportations would be inhumane, costly and impractical.

A large haystack for terrorists to hide in

Two other approaches remain. One is attrition through enforcement; the other is earned legalization.

The enforcement-only advocates say strict workplace enforcement, which is clearly impossible under the current system, and other actions would convince this population to go home.

This approach won't work. It ignores the needs of business. Who is going to fill those jobs if the 11 million people leave?

It also ignores the fact that people who were willing to risk their lives to get here aren't likely to leave as a result of some inconvenience.

The undocumented population *did* break immigration laws. But they did so at the implied invitation of American business, which hired them.

And they did so with the tacit approval of the federal government, which has long ignored its own unenforceable law against hiring the undocumented.

A population of 11 million people who hide in the shadows provides a large haystack in which terrorists can hide.

Offering undocumented workers and their families a chance to come forward and reduce the size of that haystack is good for national security. The McCain bill does so, with the requirement that they pay a fine.

Earning permanent residency would only be possible after a long process. It's not amnesty. It's a realistic approach to a thorny problem.

That brings us back to something on which there is agreement.

Comprehensive immigration reform is long overdue.

ARIZONA REPUBLIC (Phoenix, AZ): Untying the knot of immigration 10/30

Real reform must be more than enhanced enforcement
Sunday, October 30, 2005

Finally.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist says the Senate will take up immigration legislation early next year.

It's a welcome - and overdue - promise to tackle a monumental task.

Immigration reform will take a comprehensive plan, one that reflects the complexity of the issue and wins bipartisan support.

It has to include all the components necessary to deal with the current crisis and avert a future one.

Any lawmaker who wants to simply enhance border enforcement is either engaging in wishful thinking or looking for a trophy bill to display on next year's re-election campaign trail.

Real reform is a bigger challenge.

A real solution demands that Congress address the 11 million undocumented people currently here. They need to be offered some form of legal status in exchange for identifying themselves and demonstrating that they have been otherwise law-abiding and productive members of society.

For the sake of winning their cooperation - and retaining a needed workforce - they need to be allowed to stay on the job after paying a fine. They need a chance to earn permanent residency. A bill by Arizona's Sen. John McCain and Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake does all that.

In addition, comprehensive reform has to include a means for future guest workers to legally enter the country and be tracked. The McCain bill does that, too.

There also must be a quick, effective and accurate system for employers to verify that applicants are eligible to work here. Once this system is operating, tough enforcement will be necessary to ensure that employers no longer hire undocumented immigrants.

With those measures in place, border enforcement will be much easier because the people who currently cross the border to work here illegally will use the ports of entry.

Those left to sneak across the desert likely will be criminals or drug smugglers. They will be much easier to catch by a Border Patrol force that is no longer overwhelmed by the masses currently crossing Arizona's southern border.

It won't be easy to come up with a comprehensive reform package. But that is what's needed.

The nation waited a long time for Congress to get ready to deal with this problem. It needs to be dealt with in a realistic and complete way.

Finally.

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT GAZETTE (Little Rock, AR): Them, Us and We 05/24

Come, let us reason together

May 24, 2005

. . . And we are here as on a darkling plain Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, Where ignorant armies clash by night.

—Matthew Arnold, Dover Beach

IT'S UNLIKELY, it may be impossible, to put aside all the feelings evoked by the phrase and red flag, Illegal Immigration.

Wave those words around often enough, and loudly enough, and you'll produce a debate just as confused as the current one in the U.S. Senate over the filibuster—but one that's a lot more volatile. Because this is a subject that excites the people, not just the politicians.

Immigration, after all, isn't just a matter of parliamentary procedure; it's a question that goes to the heart of who we Americans are, and were, and will be.

The history of America is to a great extent a history of immigrations—and of the reactions to them. The country is now in the midst of the greatest wave of immigration it's experienced since the New Immigration from southern and eastern Europe at the turn of the last century (circa 1880-1920). And the emotions it's stirred are in proportion to its size.

Much of this debate is about as clear as ships passing in the night. Each side has its own banner—ILLEGAL ALIENS! versus A Nation of Immigrants!—and each may think it's sufficient to just go on repeating its favorite shibboleth. But a slogan is not an argument, no matter how often or how loudly it is repeated.

LET'S TRY a thought experiment: Suppose we could put aside all the distracting and provoking rhetoric about illegal immigration and come up with a common, constructive policy. What would it look like?

Well, such a policy would make our borders more secure, instead of the sieve they have become. So that illegal immigration would not become an even greater problem than it already is. It would make immigration an orderly process so that the Border Patrol could focus on looking for dangerous terrorists instead of people seeking only work.

As for the millions of illegals already here, ideally we would find a way for them and their children to become recognized residents and then law-abiding citizens, instead of fugitives forever vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination.

At the same time, such a policy would have to be fair. None of these illegals should be allowed to cut in line and become eligible for legal status ahead of immigrants who have followed the rules—and have waited years before being allowed into this country.

What's needed is a way to keep track of where all these now shadowy millions are, what they're doing to sustain themselves, and how far along they are on the road to citizenship. Those who are willing to come out from the shadows would pay a hefty fine—this would be no amnesty—and become part of an open process leading to full participation in American society.

A workable policy would recognize not just the illegals' interest in becoming Americans but the country's interest in them, for they play a crucial role in the economy. And their posterity will play a crucial role in the country's future. But for now these illegals are part of a vast underground economy, with all the abuses, uncertainties, and dangers that go with it.

These illegal immigrants are in effect unpersons—without the rights and protections that come with legal status. They need to be matched with willing employers, openly and legally, instead of both workers and those who hire them being left in the dark.

Illegal immigrants now constitute a second, hidden America, and no economy—or republic—can hope to thrive off the books. The alternative—just pick 'em up (by the millions) and send 'em back—makes great demagoguery but poor policy. Besides being cruel and self-destructive (think of what mass deportations would do to the economy), adopting such a simplistic reaction to a complicated problem is unrealistic. It just ain't gonna happen.

IN SHORT, a fair and constructive policy would look a lot like the bill just introduced by John McCain and Ted Kennedy in the U.S. Senate, and cosponsored by Congressmen Jim Kolbe, Jeff Flake and Luis Gutierrez in the House.

And their bill in turn looks a little like the guest-worker program George W. Bush proposed last year, though it's a decided improvement.

For example, the McCain-Kennedy bill wouldn't require these immigrants to return home after three years in order to apply for permanent residence. Instead, it would allow them to visit family and return freely thanks to a special new visa. It would give authorities a way to keep up with this immigration. And it would require three years' residence to attain permanent residence (the coveted green card) and another three years of good behavior here to apply for citizenship.

This bill also proposes a new public private corporation to teach immigrants English and civics, and generally prepare them to become full-fledged Americans.

No, this approach won't eliminate illegal immigration entirely, but nothing will so long as the jobs are here and the people desperate for work are there. People will go where work is. It's a law of economics, and maybe a law of nature. One might as well try to halt the tide.

This latest approach addresses the challenges of immigration realisticallyunlike unworkable proposals to deport tens of millions of people, wall the country off from the outside world, and punish ourselves as well as the immigrants by crippling the American economy.

The dirty little secret of those leading the charge against illegal immigration, and it's not such a secret, is that it's immigration itself that riles many of them. There will always be those who, when confronted by a system that's broken, would prefer to do almost anything besides fix it. Like jump up and down and generally fulminate. You can see how well that's worked over the past decade. Playing on fear and prejudice may further the careers of politicians who know how to ride bad feelings into office, but it won't help the country.

Why not consider doing the rational, humane and constructive thing instead? Of course that would require a whole new attitude on the part of those who have been the most vociferous on this subject; it's called forgiveness. It's said to heal the past and clear the way for a happier future. Maybe we should all try it; they say it works wonders.

Too much time has been wasted thinking in terms of Them and Us. It's time to think of how best to come together as We. Or, in the founders' phrase, how to form a more perfect union.

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE (Little Rock, AR): For rent: Social Security 06/17

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Northwest Edition
Posted on Friday, June 17, 2005
URL: http://www.nwanews.com/story/adg/119524

REMEMBER the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act?

Anyone? Hello? Anyway, the immigration reform act of the mid-1980s has proved about as effective as Hillary Clinton's health-care reform of the mid-1990s—which never quite got off the drawing board. One of the provisions of the ' 86 immigration law required that employers face fines and penalties if they hired illegal workers. So companies started demanding some paperwork from prospective employees. Like a Social Security number. Result? Listen to this from a story the other day in the New York Times: "The new law did not stop unauthorized immigrant work, of course. An estimated 10 million illegal immigrants live in the United States today, up from some 4 million before the immigration law went into effect. But it did create a thriving market for fake documents."

Also for real documents that can be sold or rented to fake immigrants. Here's the latest: Legal immigrants in the United States who got a legit Social Security number are returning to their homeland and renting out their number to illegals.

It's a practice that's almost impossible to track, and has some other rip-offs both parties can share: The renter gets to work without as much fear of being found out, and the card's legitimate owner builds up his Social Security retirement account. (He usually splits an earned-income tax credit with his Social Security alter-ego, too.)

Plus, as an Extra Added Bonus and way to job the system, this arrangement provides a convenient loophole for legals who want to leave the USA but keep their American identity. By renting that Social Security number to an illegal, a legal immigrant keeps his green card current. Although it's not hard to obtain a fake green card. According to the Times, the going rate for a Document Combo (a fake green card and a fake Social Security card) is about a hundred bucks.

Keep all this in mind should Jim Holt's practically useless but politically useful attempt at Immigration Reform gets on the ballot next year. Because the state senator's quote-unquote reform—at least in its form as a Senate bill—basically amounted to asking for more paperwork. Like proper ID to vote and proper ID to receive state services such as pre-natal care. To judge by the story in the Times on the increasing number of ID rentals, the major effect of a plan like Jim Holt's would probably be to increase the demand for fraudulent paperwork. In short, it would probably be about as effective as the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act—and a lot less humane.

A few more demands for a few more forms of identification won't solve the problem of illegal immigration or even ease it much. Immigrants—legal, illegal and in-between—we may always have with us. So long as (a) folks from other countries are desperate to come here, especially folks in Third World countries like Mexico who can practically reach across the border and touch the American Dream, and (b) the American economy battens on the cheap labor that immigrants are eager to provide.

Anybody honestly think those trends are going to change any time soon? They've only accelerated since 1986.

NEWS OF this latest racket makes the immigration bill introduced last month in the U.S. Senate by John McCain and Ted Kennedy even more relevant. And even more sensible. Because the McCain-Kennedy bill

would let immigrants who signed up for this new program visit home and return freely. They'd travel with a special new visa, so authorities could track their movements. That way, immigrants wouldn't be forced to choose between family at home or the American Dream.

As for those illegals desperate for work and a fake identity, the McCain-Kennedy bill would just let them be themselvesessentially guest workers. The bill would require three years' residence before immigrant workers could attain that coveted, and legal, green card, as well as another three years before they could apply for citizenship. And it would all happen out in the open, in full view of the authorities and the public. Unlike the way the present, underground economy operates—with all its evasion, corruption, and general disrespect for the law.

We've already tried the More Paperwork Approach to immigration reform once. And we can all see how well that's worked out. The number of illegal immigrants has more than doubled.

As our old captain in the Army used to say when we could find nothing better to do than gripe: You've got your choice. You can keep fighting the problem or you can try to solve it.

America has been fighting this problem for years, and the result has been an outdated, slapdash, thoroughly corruptible and just plain unworkable immigration policy. Let's solve the problem instead—together, humanely, openly, and constructively. Let's all come out from the shadows.

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT GAZETTE (Little Rock, AR): The Katrina Syndrome 09/01

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Northwest Edition
Posted on Thursday, September 1, 2005

"At first light, the devastation is greater than our worst fears. It's just totally overwhelming. "—Governor Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana

SOME OF US can remember when a Hurricane meant one of those potent drinks you ordered at Pat O'Brien's in the Quarter—if you had some sufficiently sober escort to prop you up on the way back to your hotel. Just one of those concoctions was enough, probably for a lifetime—or until the hurricane glass they came in eventually disappeared, or got knocked off the knick-knack shelf in a periodic housecleaning fit. Something else crashed this week besides a lot glassware—the myth, the urban legend, the inside scoop about New Orleans being hurricane-proof. Sure, from time to time some worrywart would point out that most of the Crescent City lay at sea level or below, and that if the narrow levees that separated the city from the lake gave way, or if The River were to pull another 1927, well, the town would fill with water the way a bowl does. But who listened?

Don't believe it, the street-smart would assure the credulous. Some kind of special charm protected the city, and there were actually a few spots above sea level that everybody could get to in a tight. All those crypts above ground were just there to make the quaint old cemeteries another of the city's tourist attractions. Relax: The swamplands all the way down to the mouth of the Mississippi would absorb any excess water, and send any hurricane spinning off to the poor devils in Mississippi or maybe Tennessee, so don't bother your pretty head none, it's summertime and the livin' is easy... and would you care for another one?

Well, the gris-gris turned bad this week, and right after it had looked as though one more hurricane had turned aside toward points east. Just as everyone breathed a sigh of relief and started thinking about where to dine Tuesday evening, one levee gave way at a crucial spot, then another, and the seawalls became walls of moving water. New Orleans, Land of Dreams, was turned into a nightmare landscape as Lake Pontchartrain poured into its new basin, and the bowl started to fill, just as those foolish old Jeremiahs had always said it would.

IN THE PAST, some sober local voices would be heeded, and some prudent precautions taken, but not near enough of them. A floodwall would be patched here, a channel dug there, a bayou preserved... but the Feds never completely followed through. Some ambitious plans were floated to prevent America's own Marseilles from becoming America's own Venice... but they were filed away in Washington under the all-purpose heading of Things to Be Gotten To Someday—until what had to be gotten to this week was the evacuation of the whole sodden city.

In her front-page story Wednesday, our own Michelle Hillen, riding out the storm and then the flood and now the devastation and evacuation of New Orleans, offered a sampling of the results produced by this kind of heck-and-a-peck planning over the indolent years:

"Most of this historic city, spared the worst of Hurricane Katrina's fury, flooded Tuesday when two levees failed, overwhelming the pumping system.... The water in the streets had an oily sheen and the air carried the scent of burning motor oil. Dead rats and debris floated in the streets, and cars abandoned on Canal Street were submerged. In some places in the central business district, the water was knee-high Tuesday afternoon; in others waist deep. "

And the looters we will always have with us when order breaks down. Did you see that picture of three of them on Wednesday's front page, all burdened down with what looked like new clothes still on their hangers from some ravaged shop? Hungry people taking food is one thing, well-fed looters making off with furnishings and finery quite a felonious other. There may be no cure for it except Napoleon's" whiff of grapeshot, " but where would you find a spot dry enough to support a cannon?

Besides, there are a good deal more important assignments for the National Guard and beleaguered police just now, like saving people's lives and getting them the heck out of the flooded city and squalid Superdome, a refuge turned prison. "We've lost our city, " said former Mayor Marc Morial, echoing Biloxi's Mayor A. J. Holloway: "This is our tsunami." Suddenly whole cities along the Gulf Coast are in the flood plain. At hundred-year levels.

Looking back, there are so many things that might have been done, but life has to be lived forward. That doesn't mean we can't learn from experience, including disastrous experience. Sometimes it seems Americans can learn from no other kind. There is something about us that refuses to take action until disaster strikes.

Yes, there are exceptions. Like the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. But even it wasn't created till the oil embargo of 1973-74, when the country swore it would never be blackmailed again by Middle Eastern sheikdoms, some of which we would proceed to save a couple of decades later when Saddam Hussein was still in a position to threaten them.

American foreign policy in general has long been a prime example of the Don't Plan, Then Over-React school of diplomacy. The sagacious George Kennan once compared it to a gigantic dinosaur with the brain of a pea but the power of a whole army. It might take a long time for Dino to become vaguely aware of some festering danger long in the making, but, once aware, he would thrash out with a fury that not only destroyed the irritant but everybody and everything for miles around.

For years, for decades, there was talk of a threat from a radicalized Islam and the terrorists it might be hatching, and even a sporadic response now and then, always uncertain and incomplete. But now that the danger has been recognized and a war on terror declared, already there is talk of backing off, making for the nearest exit strategy, and generally returning to somnolence under the cover of the United Nations, multilateralism and a lot of other high-sounding gris-gris. As if we could ward off our enemies with a voodoo charm and a worldly attitude instead of wiping them our where they live and thrive.

MEANWHILE, everyone—well, everyone with eyes to see—recognizes that the country's borders are anything but secure, and a kind of human flood has begun to inundate the country. The immigration system is broken, but the various plans to fix it are always being delayed. Either in favor of continuing apathy or unrealistic schemes to wall off the whole country—and its growing economy, with its need for foreign labor, capital and markets. A couple of bills that would actually reform the system—nobody says it can be made perfect—have been introduced in Congress, but only introduced. One (Kennedy-McCain) would revamp immigration law so that illegals here could pay a fine, register, and get in line for citizenship after a long waiting period—and not ahead of any legal immigrants who follow the rules. A companion bill (Cornyn-Kyl) would get serious about controlling the country's borders. But both may be done in by the temptation to wait till real disaster strikes before actually doing anything to prevent it.

And don't even think about the longbrewing crisis in Social Security. Just patch up the system here and there and hope for the best—rather than enact a fundamental, overdue reform that would let Americans actually own a share of their Social Security.

But such a reform would be unacceptably sensible. And so the president's proposal has been consigned to the same black hole that consumed all those sensible ideas about finally doing something to shore up New Orleans.... Call it the Katrina Syndrome. It's a very American condition, and it appears to be congenital.

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE (Little Rock, AR): Close, but no solution 10/24

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Northwest Edition
Posted on Monday, October 24, 2005
URL: http://www.nwanews.com/story.php?paper=adg&storyid=134207

SAY YOU own a business. A goodsized business. You specialize in manufacturing and selling whatchamacallits—not to be confused with thingamajigs or goo-gaws. You hire a hard-working fella from Mexico who's in this country as part of the president's new guest-worker program. Call him HWI. (Hard Working Immigrant. Get it ?) The man's doing great. He's learned the whatchamacallit business and seems primed for a move into management or sales. But hold on. After you've invested six years in HWI, and just when he's about to have an even bigger impact on your growing company, the government says he has to go. Sorry. His time is up. Under the president's guestworker program, HWI has to return home to Mexico for at least one year. And he has to apply for a new work permit.

Sound fair ?

Not really. Not to you the owner of Whatchamacallits Inc. And not to HWI. Not to your customers. Not to the economy. Certainly not to HWI's family.

Here we give the man a good, long taste of freedom and just when he's starting to savor it, and pay back the favor, we boot him out again ?

Not only isn't that fair, it's bad business practice. It's also unrealistic and shortsighted.

But that's what George W. Bush has in mind with his new guest-worker program and solution to the illegal-immigration problem. Which isn't quite the right solution. In at least one case, the plan trades one set of problems for another.

John McCain gets it. The (sometimes) maverick senator from Arizona understands the issue of illegal immigration not least because he's a senator from Arizona. Senator McCain can sound like the GOP's biggest idealist, but he sounds downright practical when it comes to the president's guest-worker program : He wonders about the businesses that rely on immigration labor and the children these immigrants may have while they're in the United States. (Those kids are U. S. citizens, you know.)

To quote Senator McCain on the president's plan : "Somebody is going to have to explain how that is workable." Translation : You call this a plan, Mr. President ?

Of course, John McCain has his own immigration-reform bill. So naturally he's not gonna go all goosey over the president's plan. Senator McCain has cosponsored a plan with Ted Kennedy that also lets newcomers work for six years with a visa. But then, instead of kicking 'em out for a year while they apply for a new work permit and go through this whole uncertain rigmarole again, the worker can stay if he wants so long as he's on track for a green card.

Uh oh. That sounds unspeakably sensible. And we all know there's no place for a sensible approach to immigration reform. More important, the McCain-Kennedy plan sounds fair to the immigrants, their families, and the companies they work for.

It also sounds very American. If you're here to work and you play by the rules, dot your i's and cross your t's, and get in line and wait your turn, then you're welcome. If not, adios.

The president's plan isn't without merit. For one thing, it would require those 11 million illegal immigrants already in this country to (a) pay a fine and (b) go to the back of the line behind those newcomers who are here legally. But all immigrant workers could apply for a three-year work permit. The bill proposed by Senators McCain and Kennedy has a similar provision—requiring illegals already here to pay fines as well as show proof of work and good conduct to get a temporary permit.

Problem is, the president's plan ultimately punishes both legal and illegal workers by booting them out once their time is up. McCain-Kennedy rewards law-abiding foreign workers by letting them apply to live here for good after a few years. (The other immigration-reform plan gaining some traction in Washington comes from Senators Jon Kyl of, again, Arizona and John Cornyn of Texas. But they'd make the 11 million illegals go home before they could apply for an American job. Which sounds like a logistical nightmare—can you imagine trying to deport 11 million folks?—and a sure way to force them farther underground.)

What a weird, weird, insular and egotistical world Washington must be. For here we have a problem—illegal immigration—and here we have two solutions that are almost real solutions, and yet the pols involved seem poles apart.

Why ? Because they all want credit. So when it comes to new ways to reform immigration, we're stuck on close, but no cigarillo.

ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION (GA): Seize effort to ease immigration load 05/22

OUR OPINION: Bipartisan bill aims to reform system that flouts rule of law and encourages underground economy
Staff
Sunday, May 22, 2005

The United States needs an immigration policy that secures its borders, re-establishes the rule of law and recognizes how dependent its own economy is on illegal immigrants who have crossed our borders in hopes of bettering their lives.

Getting agreement on the details of such a policy seems an impossible task in the current political climate. Virtually any proposed change in the existing immigration law is tagged with favoring businesses over individuals or catering to lawbreakers at the expense of law-abiding Americans.

Sadly, the lack of a thoughtful national discussion on immigration policy has allowed extremists to dominate the debate with a too-simplistic send-them-all-home message that neither reflects practical reality nor the nation's rich heritage of assimilation. That's why a comprehensive immigration-reform measure introduced by a bipartisan group of U.S. Senate and House members this month merits attention. It contains a substantive list of reforms needed to deal with the impact of an underground economy of 10 million to 12 million immigrants in the country illegally.

The "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act" would:

> Allow most of the illegal immigrants in the United States to apply for a six-year visa by paying $2,000 in fines --- half up front and the remainder at the end of the period --- plus yet-to-be determined processing fees. Applicants would have to meet English language and civics requirements now compulsory for citizenship candidates, clear medical and security checks and be fingerprinted. They also would need to document their U.S. work history and pay back income taxes. At the end of six years, they could apply for permanent residency.

> Grant temporary visas to would-be immigrants to fill low-skill jobs that U.S. citizens don't take. Applicants would have to pay a $500 fee, clear a security check and undergo a medical exam, at the applicant's expense. The visa would be good for three years and could be extended once, for another three years.

> Combat fake IDs by requiring tamper-proof, machine-readable visas that would be checked by employers against a national database of eligible workers. The computerized system would replace the current paper process that is inefficient and subject to fraud.

> Rely on an honor system for those in the country illegally to come forward and for businesses to check eligibility of workers. To combat cheating, fines for knowingly hiring illegal immigrants would be doubled and surprise workplace checks increased.

> Require foreign labor recruiters to register with Homeland Security.

> Tighten border security against terrorists and illegal immigrants. It would mandate aerial surveillance of U.S. borders and direct the Homeland Security secretary to devise a comprehensive plan to secure them.

> Provide technical and financial support to Central American countries to thwart illegal immigrants trying to use Mexico as a conduit into the United States.

> Reimburse state and local governments for the cost of arresting, charging and detaining illegal immigrants.

> Encourage Mexico to improve health- care services for its citizens to reduce the financial burden imposed on the United States by illegal immigrants who come here seeking better medical care.

> Accelerate a current U.S.-Mexico program to promote economic opportunity in Mexico.

The measure doesn't solve all of the problems with the current system, but it does provide a foundation for a more meaningful debate about how to reform it. For instance, relying on an honor system for illegal immigrants to come forward so their employers can check their status may be naive and impractical. Similarly, employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants should face more than just increased fines. Repeat violators should be jailed.

Nor does the bill contain any real hope of relieving local school districts of the overwhelming burden of paying for English language instruction for illegal immigrants. Any reform proposal must include an expanded federal role in paying for this.

Still, the proposal attempts to deal in other ways with the severe impact the flow of illegal immigrants has had on many communities. Day labor pools --- the source of neighborhood complaints about litter and loitering --- would likely go away. Funds would be appropriated for hospital and health-care providers that have been hit hard by immigrants who show up needing care. Local police departments will get money to enforce the law instead of being told to ignore it.

Perhaps most important, the measure flatly declares that immigrants here now without permission are breaking the law and will have to pay a price for doing so. It also codifies what's expected of them --- such as making an attempt to learn English and the customs of their new country.

Critics --- and there will be many --- have already labeled the bill an amnesty proposal that won't work and will continue to suppress American wages. They point to a failed 1986 amnesty plan that was supposed to deal with the same issue.

But this measure is much more comprehensive. It involves almost every department of the federal government and requires them to make periodic reports about the status of immigrants here as well as those who still want to come.

The nation needs this debate. This proposal will get us started.

ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION (GA): Address illegal immigration now 08/24

08/24/05

Congressional lawmakers will have their hands full when they get back to work after Labor Day. But no matter how busy they get on John Roberts' Supreme Court confirmation hearings, Social Security finances and other issues, they should not let immigration policy fall through their fingers.

The influx of illegal immigrants and the movement of illegal drugs across the U.S. border with Mexico is so troublesome that in mid-August the governors of New Mexico and Arizona declared states of emergency, a method to secure extra federal and state money for local law enforcement. That should be enough to move congressional debate on the issue up a notch or so.

Perhaps the embarrassment to the Department of Homeland Security caused by the Democratic governors' actions will provide the motivation to engage the administration on the issue as well. Homeland Secretary Michael Chertoff and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao didn't even show up for a Senate hearing in July on two competing proposals to deal with border security and illegal immigration.

It should be noted — and has been by critics who see a political motive in the emergency declarations — that Bill Richardson, the governor of New Mexico, and Janet Napolitano, the governor of Arizona, are expected to run for re-election next year. Still, their actions were endorsed by some Republicans, including Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California and Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.)

"I think the governor's [Richardson's] approach was called for," Domenici told the Los Angeles Times. "I find no fault with it, given the turmoil in these communities along the border. I've spoken with the governor and told him so. We're finally to a boiling point."

If so, debate on the issue needs to heat up as well. President Bush, who in 2004 suggested the illegal immigration issue be dealt with through a guest-worker program, needs to get more involved, too. The foundation for the immigration debate already exists, in the form of the "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act." Introduced in May by a bipartisan group of Senate and House members, the legislation borrows from Bush's idea and offers a carrot-and-stick approach to illegal immigration.

There are an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants already in the United States. Any delay in tackling the problem will only make it more difficult to resolve later.

ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION (GA): Tepid attention won't stop illegals 09/07

Published on: 09/07/05

Late last month, President Bush acknowledged the increasing frustration over illegal immigration in Western states, but only after the governors of Arizona and New Mexico declared states of emergency to try to cope with the problem. Let's hope it indicates a greater willingness to commit the resources needed to stem the illegal tide and to campaign aggressively for a long-term solution.

"We have an obligation to enforce the borders," Bush said during a speech in Arizona. "There are more resources that will be available, we'll have more folks on the border; there will be more detention space to make sure that those who are stopped trying to illegally enter our country are able to be detained."

Having admitted that more needs to be done to stem the flow of illegal immigrants and drugs from Mexico into the United States, the president needs to keep focused on the issue. There are an estimated 11 million illegals in the United States, and according to Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) another 3,000 cross the border every day from Mexico alone. It's not a problem that can be addressed occasionally and then ignored for long periods or allowed to drop down the priority list.

That's what appears to have happened before in the administration. The president offered an idea early in 2004 to permit workers who now enter the United States illegally to come legally but temporarily. But by this summer, when a Senate committee held hearings on proposed immigration legislation, some of which was based on Bush's proposal, Homeland Secretary Michael Chertoff and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao declined to attend.

Likewise, the White House enthusiasm for beefing up the Border Patrol has waxed and waned. The president produced squeals of protest in Congress when he proposed only enough money in fiscal 2006 for the Department of Homeland Security to add 210 positions to the Border Patrol. Both the House and Senate have insisted that the budget contain funding for about 1,000 new border agents.

Paying half attention to a problem is almost as bad as ignoring it. The president — and the country — can't afford a lapse on illegal immigration.

AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN (TX): Bridging the immigration divide 05/17

EDITORIAL BOARD

Tuesday, May 17, 2005

The latest round of the seemingly never-ending debate over immigration has U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a central casting conservative, and U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., a central casting liberal, working shoulder-to-shoulder to make something happen.

They offer a step toward fixing a bewildering set of immigration rules and regulations that has proven ineffective in stopping a swelling tide of illegal immigration. That phenomenon, driven by a complex set of global economic factors, is the object of a lot talk, but precious little action.

Muttering, complaining and stomping feet won't deter illegal immigration, but provisions in the McCain-Kennedy proposals might at least stem the flow. Included in the proposals are a guest worker program — a common sense approach pushed by the president — and mechanisms to offer incentives for foreign workers to become citizens.

Proponents of the immigrants are as wary of a guest worker scheme as those who oppose them. The result is nothing happens and immigrants keep coming.

A guest worker program won't stop illegal immigration in its tracks, but would at least give governments on both sides of the border an idea of who and where the immigrants are.

It's amazing that with all the time and attention devoted to this topic that nothing much has resulted. If nothing else, members of Congress should take note of that and show their constituents some action instead of wasting time and money on bluster, hyperbole and xenophobia.

A good faith look at the McCain-Kennedy proposal would be a nice place to start.

BALTIMORE SUN (MD): A road to reform 05/17

May 17, 2005

WITH THE introduction of a comprehensive and thoughtful immigration reform proposal last week, Sens. John McCain and Edward M. Kennedy, the current darlings of immigrant advocacy groups, emerged as voices of reason in the increasingly heated and politicized debate over immigration.

Their aptly named "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act" addresses numerous concerns of those on the right and left about immigration policy, focusing the debate instead exactly where it should be - on keeping the nation's borders safe, controlling the flow of migrants who illegally cross them daily, meeting the needs of a labor market hungry for low-wage workers, and moving into mainstream society and onto the tax rolls millions of illegal immigrants in this country.

Among other things, the proposed legislation creates a new visa program to allow in 400,000 foreign workers annually. The visas would be good for up to six years, after which workers would be required to either return home or apply for legal permanent residency. Participants would be hired for specific jobs, clear security and medical checks, and pay at least $500 in application fees.

What's more, states would be reimbursed for detention and hospitalization costs related to undocumented immigrants, addressing the concerns of states with high numbers of migrants. The measure also calls for formal workplace protections for the workers, random labor law compliance audits of employers by the U.S. Department of Labor and increased fines for illegal employment practices. It requires participating countries to sign agreements with the United States pledging to help control the flow of people seeking jobs here, and for Mexico to promote economic development at home to staunch the outward flow of job-seekers, and to share health care costs for Mexican workers in the program.

Undocumented workers here who apply for permanent residency would be required to pay back taxes and meet English and civics requirements. This would undo some of the damage done to immigrants' image since the 9/11 attacks and help fully integrate them into American society. No doubt a great many would jump at the chance, and privilege, of becoming Americans - even at a cost of $2,000 in fines and applications fees.

At a time when civility and compromise are in short supply in Congress, Senators McCain and Kennedy, a Republican and a Democrat, and three co-sponsors in the House, are examples of bipartisanship at its best. Congressional lawmakers should follow their lead and support the proposal.

BALTIMORE SUN (MD) Deal making 08/19
August 19, 2005

CONGRESSIONAL lawmakers unsuccessful in crafting legislation on immigration reform since the 9/11 attacks may try to reach consensus when they return from their August recess. This would be a good time for President Bush, who is working behind the scenes to broker a deal, to publicly encourage lawmakers stymied by emotions and politics to get behind a plan.

Mr. Bush wants to avoid alienating conservative Republicans calling for stricter limitations on immigration and at the same time to prevent his party from being viewed as anti-immigrant. But immigration reform is one of the signature issues of his presidency and he should openly support legislation encompassing his past calls for better border control, a guest-worker program and a path to legalization for some of the millions of undocumented but otherwise law-abiding and hard-working immigrants living here.

Although he has since backed off legalization, Mr. Bush and others on Capitol Hill - including opponents of legalization - readily acknowledge that undocumented immigrant workers are essential to the nation's economy. By backing legalization, Mr. Bush would gain support from Democrats in Congress who correctly believe undocumented immigrants with long-held jobs, American-born children and other ties to this country should be given the chance to become legal residents.

Legislation proposed by Sens. Edward Kennedy, the Massachusetts Democrat, and John McCain, the Arizona Republican, includes legalization and hews closely to ideas advocated by Mr. Bush. A competing bill sponsored by Republican Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and John Kyl of Arizona has tougher border security measures and would require undocumented immigrants to return to their home country to apply for employment in the U.S., an unrealistic and unworkable proposition.

That Arizona senators sponsored both bills is not surprising. The state has been inundated with illegal border crossings from neighboring Mexico and is now the epicenter of the national debate over illegal immigration. Arizona residents have voted to deny illegal immigrants social services and have organized citizen patrols of the border to prevent more migrants from entering.

Just this week, Arizona's governor and the governor of New Mexico declared states of emergency because of serious spikes in violence and smuggling along their borders. The declarations, which free up state and federal dollars for extra law enforcement personnel and border surveillance equipment, are embarrassing reminders of congressional inaction and the lack of U.S. border security.

Both Senate bills address the frustrations of residents in border states. The Kennedy-McCain proposal, though more thoughtful and practical, might gain support with more border-security measures added to it. The Cornyn-Kyl bill could do better with less punitive actions. President Bush should work with Congress to reach a workable middle ground.

BALTIMORE SUN (MD): Courting reform 10/18

Originally published October 18, 2005

THE WHITE House's courting of congressional lawmakers to gain support for President Bush's immigration reform plan is a good strategy for renewing interest in an important administration policy goal.

Mr. Bush, who could use some legislative success right now, should take advantage of the growing momentum for immigration reform in the Senate by working more closely with key lawmakers such as Sens. Edward M. Kennedy and John McCain, who have introduced legislation containing many of the president's proposals, including a guest worker program. The senators' measure has bipartisan support and has been endorsed by influential labor and business groups, including the Service Employees International Union and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

By hosting regular immigration briefings for members of Congress, the White House hopes to engage Republicans and Democrats in "an ongoing dialogue about comprehensive, realistic immigration reform" that includes border security, interior enforcement and a guest worker program.

In the House, immigration reform has pitted so-called enforcers (lawmakers who favor tougher border control measures) against reformers (lawmakers who favor more liberal changes to immigration policy). The enforcers have promised to block any legislation that expands immigration or brings guests workers into the country, and recently signed a letter urging the president to focus on border security instead. The president should disregard this advice not only because it fails to take economic realities into account - the immigrants fill jobs - but also because it ignores the millions of undocumented immigrants already living and working in the U.S. It makes no sense to treat them like a shadow labor pool when they could be legal, taxpaying workers.

The House leadership organized "unity dinners" to encourage lawmakers to work out their differences on immigration. Mr. Bush, the self-described "uniter," should use his bully pulpit to push lawmakers in both the House and Senate to act on this important issue.

BOSTON GLOBE (MA): Safe and open borders 05/21

May 21, 2005

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS do farm work that puts food on American tables. They clean workplaces. They work in meat-processing plants. They are a policy contradiction: boosting the economy but breaking the law.

Last week, Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain offered some relief by filing the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, a model of good policy and good diplomacy. The bill would increase security *and* reform the law. It unites Democrats and Republicans, and it makes allies of liberals who praise the promise of reform and conservatives who laud the tough enforcement.

A key security feature is improved information-sharing and better coordination between other countries and this country's city, state, and federal governments. The bill also calls for enhanced technology. This is important, but as Sept. 11 showed, better human intelligence is essential. The bill would also give local law enforcement more money to pay for prosecuting illegal immigrants.

The bill would create 400,000 renewable, three-year, temporary visas for foreign workers, offering a rational alternative to sneaking into the country and working in the shadows. Companies could legally hire the workers they need. The visa would be portable, so workers could change jobs. And they could seek protection from workplace abuses or violations of their rights. Companies that continued to hire undocumented workers would face stiffer fines.

Other countries would join the effort, forming immigration pacts with the United States to control the flow of migration. Mexico and the United States would work together to create more healthcare options, for example, so the costs don't fall solely on this country.

A few provisions seem unwise. The bill calls for immigrants to pay a $500 fee for a temporary visa, a sum many are unlikely to have. There would also be a chance to seek permanent legal immigrant status, but only for those who could pay up to several thousand dollars in fees and fines.

The next step is selling the bill in Congress, where some may claim it coddles lawbreakers and encourages terrorists. This false charge should be confronted at every turn. Creating a legal path for migrant workers is not an automatic invitation to greater danger.

Business leaders have a stake in reform because rational laws will help them hire needed workers without breaking the law. And President Bush should add his approval.

Immigration and terrorism are largely separate issues. The events of Sept. 11 do mean that it's crucial for the country to increase security. But the Kennedy-McCain bill shows that safety can co-exist with comprehensive immigration reform.

BOSTON GLOBE (MA): Answers on immigrants 7/26

July 26, 2005

TODAY THE Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to hash out the best way to reform immigration law. It is badly needed but politically messy work, a matter of creating a rational, legal environment for an estimated 11 million immigrants who are here illegally but help fuel the economy.

The committee will consider two bills, one from Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain, and one from Jon Kyl and John Cornyn. McCain and Kyl are both from Arizona and Cornyn is from Texas, border states where managing immigration is a large, costly effort. And all four senators wisely see the need to work with other countries.

In June, speaking at the first US-Mexican bishops conference on migration, Cornyn said: "We must find a way to protect our border security and uphold the rule of law, while at the same time bringing immigrants who are truly here to work and provide for their families out of the shadows and into the law."

But the Kyl-Cornyn bill focuses too heavily on law enforcement, punishment, and creating legal hurdles for immigrants. It would create a temporary worker program designed to give immigrants a legal way to hold jobs in the United States, with a new visa category that lets people work for two years. They could renew the visa, but only after they had spent a year living continuously in their home countries. Such a schedule could create a troubling boom/bust cycle for immigrants and deprive employers of seasoned employees. And the bill makes no mention of labor law protection for workers.

Immigrants would also be asked to deport themselves by applying for "mandatory departure status." They would leave the United States and pursue reentry through legal channels. It's a convoluted option that could encourage people to stay hidden.

It's "an unrealistic and unworkable immigration reform plan," says Ali Noorani, head of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

A tough approach might sell in Congress as a means to increase safety. But it would not address the problem, since immigration and national security are largely separate issues. Immigrants typically come here to earn money, not attack the country.

The Kennedy-McCain bill offers a better blend of security and opportunity. It also sets up a temporary worker program but allows for visa renewals without requiring people to leave the country. Money would be invested in giving immigrants English classes. And the bill would create the possibility, though not the guarantee, of citizenship. Congress should act quickly. These proposals offer a fair deal for immigrants and common-sense protections for the country.

THE 1590 BROADCASTER (Nashua, NH): Immigration control 08/25

Thursday, August 25, 2005 - Technically, a district court judge ruled correctly recently by dismissing criminal trespassing charges against eight illegal immigrants, but Hudson Police Chief Richard Gendron was right to file charges and bring the undocumented aliens to court., Gendron should be applauded for helping to highlight some of the nation's problems with homeland security and illegal immigration. He identified illegal immigration as a pressing concern and tried to do something about it. That's more than we can say for our nation's leaders., This is a national issue that demands attention at the national level. Federal officials should learn from Gendron's example.

Congress needs to step up to the plate and determine what must be done to address the country's burgeoning illegal-immigrant population.

Gendron, and the police chief in New Ipswich were trying to enforce the laws of the land -- local, state and national -- but because there's considerable confusion regarding immigration and homeland security, local police were caught in the middle.

Their dilemma provides additional proof that we need to improve our immigration laws, not to hurt hardworking immigrants, but to secure our borders and keep our country safe.

A bill sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, is now working its way through Congress and should be supported by our nation's leaders. It will improve border security, crack down on immigrant smugglers and provide a path to citizenship for foreign workers. It will also check immigrants' criminal histories and require them to pay all regular fees.

It's time for Washington lawmakers to do their jobs by taking action on this vital issue and stop forcing local officials to deal with the nation's illegal-immigration problem on their own.

This is a problem that isn't going to go away without action at the federal level.

BUSINESS WEEK (National): Tough-But-Fair Rules For Tomorrow's Illegal Immigrants 07/08
Fri Jul 8, 4:00 PM ET

They may be here illegally, but they are certainly not undocumented. Nearly 4 million Mexican citizens living in the U.S. hold matriculas -- identity cards issued by a Mexican consular office. And more than 8 million (often illegal) workers have individual tax identification numbers issued by the Internal Revenue Service to foreigners who are ineligible to receive a Social Security card yet hold jobs or assets that make them liable for U.S. taxes. A rapidly growing number of American businesses are accepting those documents to offer the nation's 11 million illegal residents everything from new Fords to home mortgages.

That's not without controversy. Many angry U.S. citizens rightly note that American business is rapidly legitimizing the residence of immigrants who have broken the law to enter or remain in the U.S. But there's a deeper force at work here: the American Dream. Its promise of opportunity and a better way of life has become such a powerful symbol worldwide that it is almost naive to expect foreigners to accept that it's reserved only for those who are here legally. And since America shares a porous 2,000-mile border with a developing nation, Mexico, stemming the resulting wave of illegal immigration is increasingly like trying to hold back the ocean's tide.

Besides, let's be real: Rightly or wrongly, the U.S. is not about to arrest and herd millions of men, women, and children into boxcars for transport back across the Rio Grande. That's a nativist's fantasy that will never come to be. So it's time for Washington to come up with a reasoned, consistent way to deal with the illegal immigrants who are already here and to set tough-but-fair new rules for those seeking to work in the U.S. in the future.

FIRST, ANY GUEST-WORKER program should be targeted at jobs the U.S. has difficulty filling. Although Mexican President Vicente Fox has taken considerable heat for his racially insensitive remarks in recent months, he is correct that there are some jobs that few Americans of any race want -- at least not at the low wages they currently command. Think farm work or service jobs such as lawn workers or restaurant dishwashers. Many of those jobs already go to illegals, who accept minimal wages because they're more than comparable pay back home. Identifying these job categories and setting up registries where guest workers -- as well as American workers -- can see available openings would ensure that foreigners got jobs only after U.S. citizens have taken a pass. And all employers should be required to withhold payroll and income taxes from the earnings of guest workers.

NEXT, THERE MUST BE reasonable limits on the number of guest workers -- probably fewer than 400,000 per year, until policymakers can study the effect on U.S. labor markets -- and on how long they may work in the U.S. The McCain-Kennedy immigration bill currently in the Senate would let guests remain for three years, with one three-year extension before they must either attain green card status or return home. The government has every right to charge for these guest visas -- a scarce and precious commodity in the eyes of foreign workers -- and should definitely charge considerably more for any applicant who is already living in the U.S. illegally. That's one way to deal, partially, with criticism that a guest program rewards foreigners who entered the country illegally. Another would be to strengthen enforcement of current laws requiring employers to ascertain applicants' immigration status before they are hired -- a practice often ignored by employers hungry for cheap labor.

Third, guest-worker legislation should ensure guests maintain financial ties to their native countries, perhaps by requiring a certain dollar level of annual remittances to family back home or by maintaining a foreign household while in the U.S. While difficult to enforce, requiring active economic ties back home boosts the likelihood guests will leave when their visas expire.

Last, any guest-worker setup must include increased incentives to boost economic activity in Mexico -- the source of most illegal immigration to the U.S. Unless the U.S. works harder to give more poor Mexicans a reason to stay home, they will continue to flood the shadow economy north of the border. So helping Mexico develop jobs, particularly in poor regions far from the U.S. border, is in our own national interest.

The need for such reform is certainly distasteful to many Americans, but it's unavoidable. If some conservative lawmakers feel they have to hold their noses while supporting President George W. Bush's call for guest-worker legislation, so be it. Unfortunately, this late in the game -- a new Bear, Stearns Asset Management study puts the tally of illegals at up to 20 million -- principle must yield to pragmatism.

CHATTANOOGA TIMES FREE PRESS (TN): Immigration bills deserve attention 08/23

August 23, 2005 Tuesday

Given the war in Iraq, the rising price of gas and other petroleum products, the sputtering economy and the increasing cost of health care and prescription drugs, Congress has a full plate these days. That's no excuse, however, for legislators to ignore the immigration bills that await them following the current recess.

Immigration is a devilishly difficult political subject, one that demands attention for two important reasons. The first is the fear that porous borders invite terrorists. The second is the difficulty of controlling the nation's southern border, where rising pressure from those who wish to live and work in the United States overwhelms border police and allows massive numbers of illegal immigrants into the country.

In a sense, the immigration issue, particularly the problem in the south, is confirmation of the American dream. Millions of people obviously want to live and work in this country for utterly sensible reasons, primarily the opportunity to provide their families with a better and more fulfilling life.

That's the same dream that has attracted generations of immigrants to these shores. Problem is, the numbers are vastly magnified these days, and it is increasingly difficult to deal with the problems a surfeit of immigrants and would-be immigrants creates. In addition, there are a veritable handful of people who seek to gain entry into this country for evil purposes by using immigration as a cover.

Those and other issues should be addressed promptly by Congress. Further delay will exacerbate a problem already so great that two border-state governors -- in Arizona and New Mexico -- have declared states of emergency because of border issues.

Congress should address those specific problems as well as broad immigration policy promptly. The current system is far too chaotic. There is a need to create equitable immigration statutes that honor America's promise to those who wish to partake of its freedoms, but that provide a workable infrastructure to control the process.

Resolving the problem will take some creativity. One facet involves the millions of illegal immigrants already in this country. Most of them work, albeit at menial tasks many Americans eschew, and would like nothing better than to become citizens. Some proposals in Congress would allow that. One "guest worker" plan would create a framework in which illegal workers would move toward legal status in a closely monitored program. That's a start, particularly if it were coupled with meaningful adjustment of immigration quotas, improved screening of would-be legal immigrants and improved security in states where current cross-border law enforcement is near collapse.

In the past, President Bush has preferred playing politics with immigration policy. Rather than address the problem head-on, he's dilly-dallied and obfuscated, hoping to appease conservative businessmen and other supporters who benefit from the cheap labor of illegal immigrants. It's time for such nonsense to stop.

There is growing bipartisan sentiment across the country for meaningful immigration reform. Congress should heed the call. The country will pay a high price if the problem is allowed to fester and to grow worse.

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES (IL): Washington must move now to stem illegal immigration 08/22

August 22, 2005

The writing has been on the wall, in English and Spanish, for some time: Unless the United States takes decisive action to fortify and clarify its immigration policies, the problem created by escalating numbers of Mexicans crossing over illegally will only get worse. They certainly have taken a turn that way in Arizona and New Mexico, both of which recently declared a state of emergency following an upsurge of violence and smuggling along their borders.

Everyone, it seems, is at risk in this increasingly dangerous climate. Mexicans desperate for economic opportunity die trying to make it here. Civilians in the line of fire or the path of getaway vehicles have been injured or killed. A New Mexico police chief was shot at as he inspected an abandoned vehicle. Ranchers have property and livestock damaged by smuggled immigrants. But even as the situation has intensified -- 40 percent of recently polled Mexicans say they want to move to the United States and a stunning 20 percent say they would do so illegally -- there has been precious little movement by the federal government toward a solution.

"There doesn't seem to be any sense of urgency," said Gov. Janet Napolitano of Arizona. Indeed, since President Bush proposed his controversial but promising immigration policy months before his re-election, it has floated in limbo. Senators Jon Kyl and John Cornyn recently introduced a bill to combine tough enforcement of existing immigration laws with a "temporary worker" plan of the sort proposed first by Bush and then in a bill proposed by Senators John McCain and Edward Kennedy.

It's a tough issue for politicians worrying about offending some constituency. Xenophobic voters don't want to hear anything that lets any illegal migrant stay in the country. With the Hispanic vote becoming more important, many politicians don't want to risk alienating them by taking a tough stand on illegal immigration.

But as the flareups in the Southwest tell us, someone is going to have to take the lead on immigration, and soon. Mexican President Vicente Fox talks impressively about the need for his country and ours to take joint responsibility for the problem but has done nothing to hold up his end of that bargain.

Clearly, any solution will have to encompass both a realistic guest-worker program and measures to safeguard the border. Though Napolitano and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson are both Democrats who face re-election, their calling for more federal resources -- money and men -- to take control is not a partisan cause. Republican Gov. Rick Perry of Texas, also up for re-election, has called as well for a significant increase in federal involvement. The bottom line of course is that our economy and society need the labor provided by illegal immigrants. Our national interest in the era of global terrorism requires secure borders. Immigration reform can address both. The White House and Congress need to work together on this.

A constant eye on sex offenders

These are scary statistics: There are 400,000 registered sex offenders in the United States. About 17,000 of them are living in Illinois, and 85 percent of them committed their crimes against children. Many of them are repeat offenders; recidivism is very high for sexual predators.

That is why Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.) is sponsoring a proposal to force child sex offenders to wear electronic monitoring bracelets outfitted with a Global Positioning System. It is the only way to make sure

that these sick criminals don't go near schools, parks, or any other place where children gather. It is the only way to monitor their movements.

In Illinois, 200 of the state's most dangerous sex predators already have been outfitted with GPS bracelets, and Attorney General Lisa Madigan supports Emanuel's proposal. "Sex offenders do not want the public, do not want law enforcement especially, to know where they are," she said. "Well, if you've got a GPS unit attached to you, we know where you are. You can't escape."

Emanuel believes the bracelet will strike the "right balance" between the civil rights of the felons who are being released back into the communities and the protection of the public. With so many sex offenders being repeat offenders, this is an essential way to ensure public safety.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE (IL): A bid for order on the border 05/17
May 17, 2005

Even before the ink was dry on the latest immigration reform plan, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.), the leading congressional proponent of curbs on immigration, opened fire. He charged the plan was weak on enforcement and would only encourage more illegal immigration.

Tancredo should read the bipartisan proposal again, or perhaps for the first time. The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, introduced last week in the Senate by John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), and in the House by Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) and Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.), goes a long way toward the kind of realistic, humane and comprehensive immigration reform the nation needs.

In many significant aspects it parallels a guest worker program for illegal immigrants that was proposed last year by President Bush but never moved as legislation.

McCain-Kennedy would grant about 400,000 guest worker H-5A visas each year, the exact number fluctuating according to the demands of the low-skill labor market. All incoming foreign workers would have to demonstrate they have a job waiting in the U.S. They would have to clear health, security and other checks and pay a $500 fee before being issued a tamperproof work permit card.

Enforcement provisions, for both incoming workers and those already here, include heavy fines for employers who hire unqualified immigrants and for immigrants who do not abide by the terms of the new guest worker program.

Undocumented immigrants who are already here could obtain a work permit and eventual permanent residence if they meet minimum work requirements, pay a $2,000 fine, prove payment of taxes and register for military service. Spouses and children of those immigrants would be allowed to apply for permanent residence too.

The chief differences between the McCain-Kennedy and Bush plans are the possibilities of legal residence and eventual U.S. citizenship for those who meet the requirements. Bush would grant three-year work visas, renewable once, after which immigrants would have to return to their home country. McCain-Kennedy would allow immigrants to seek legal residence, and once that is established they could eventually apply for citizenship.

With McCain-Kennedy on the table there is common ground for Congress and the White House to hammer out an immigration reform bill. That is urgently needed to safeguard national security, provide an adequate labor supply and protect the rights of American and immigrant workers.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE (IL): Back to immigration reform 10/09

Sunday, October 9, 2005

Even with a policy plate filled to overflowing--the Iraq war, two catastrophic hurricanes and costly rebuilding efforts, plus stalled legislative initiatives, such as Social Security reform--the Bush administration has revived, for at least the third time, its push to overhaul the American immigration system. Top White House advisers, including Karl Rove, have been meeting with legislative leaders over this difficult issue. Give Bush credit for the tenacity and the guts to keep wrestling with such an intractable problem.

Immigration reform is like a puzzle with five extraordinarily difficult pieces to fit.

The first is the scope of the problem: What does the U.S. do with the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants already here, assuming we are not going to put them in freight trains and run them out of the country? Second is the demand by some business sectors--the agricultural industry comes to mind--for low-wage workers. Third is congressional concern with law enforcement. The presence of so many illegal immigrants demonstrates to some that laws are either unenforced or unenforceable. Fourth is fear of a terrorist attack carried out by foreigners on our soil.

The toughest one, though, is the fifth: politics. A top-to-bottom reform of immigration faces strong headwinds both in Congress, particularly in the president's own party, and among voters, who have no patience for anything that smacks of "amnesty" for illegal immigrants.

Comprehensive reform was near the top of the agenda at the beginning of Bush's first term, but got pushed aside by the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Last year the administration brought up the topic again, but so loud was the opposition from Republican constituencies that the plans quickly went back in the drawer.

The bipartisan proposal getting a hearing at the White House now could break the impasse over reform. In the Senate the package is sponsored by Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) Mirror legislation is sponsored in the House by Reps. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.)

It recognizes the obvious--there are millions of immigrants in the U.S. who are illegal and living beyond any scrutiny or control.

Illegal immigrants would get work visas good for six years, but would have to prove they have a work history in this country, no criminal record, and that there is nothing in their background that makes them a security risk. Applicants would have to pay penalties and fees as high as $2,000 per adult, and any back taxes owed. After the first six years of work here--and proof of some English proficiency, additional security and criminal record checks, medical exam and registration in the armed forces--temporary workers could apply for permanent residency. At no point during this process would the formerly illegal immigrants be allowed to "jump the line" ahead of those immigrants who have waited to enter the country through legal channels.

If this all falls into place--a huge if--businesses would get their workers, undocumented workers would gain legal status, and the nation would get better border security

A solution could yet be assembled by the White House and Congress. "The most positive thing to me is [the White House] seems deeply committed to a comprehensive approach," Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) told the Los Angeles Times. Rove also said the administration is open to ideas from Congress.

That is positive indeed, because for it to work, immigration reform needs to be comprehensive. Leave a couple of pieces off, and you will not have solved anything at all.

CONCORD MONITOR (NH): Here illegally 05/15

Police chief called attention to a problem too long ignored.
Article published May 15, 2005

Last month, New Ipswich Police Chief Garrett Chamberlain made it to the talk-show circuit by charging 21-year-old Jorge Mora Ramirez, a Mexican national who works for a Jaffrey construction company, with criminal trespass for being in the United States illegally. Ramirez's arrest marked the first such use of criminal trespass laws. Last week, the Hudson police used the same charge to prosecute two Nashua residents who are in the country illegally.

All three arrests occurred as a result of routine traffic stops for apparently just causes. There has been no charge that the police engaged in racial profiling. But were they grandstanding and wasting their efforts? Grandstanding? Yes. A wasted effort? No.

There are an estimated 11 million people in the nation illegally. Some 500,000 cross America's borders each year and hundreds die trying. But the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which is now part of the Homeland Security Department, was not amused by Chamberlain's actions.

Enforcing the nation's immigration laws is not the responsibility of local police officers, an agency spokesperson said. Nor, because it is too busy dealing with illegal immigrants who are, or may be, criminals or terrorists, can the agency afford to arrest and deport every illegal alien rounded up by the police.

Nevertheless, we're glad Chamberlain found a novel way to point out that America's immigration system is a hypocritical mess.

The timing of the New Hampshire arrests was fortuitous. Plans to reform immigration policy, including one by President Bush and another filed this week by Sens. Ted Kennedy and John McCain, are before Congress.

The president's proposal can be summed up as a "toil and go home"guest worker plan. Immigrants - up to 400,000 of them - would receive permission to come to the United States to work on the condition that they returned home after five years.

The McCain-Kennedy bill is a "work and stay" plan. It would create a way for the millions of illegal aliens already here to remain legally. It would also allow a limited number of new workers to enter each year.

We're no fan of the Bush proposal. It would be a mistake to create a two-tiered society of resident citizens and low-wage guest workers with no stake in the future of America save as a place to make money. The McCain-Kennedy plan puts illegal workers and their families on a path - albeit a long one - toward citizenship. In time, they would melt in the pot like those who came before them.

Despite the increased threat of terrorism, the government has taken few meaningful steps to combat illegal immigration. That's because, as McCain said, the economy would grind to a halt if all the illegal workers who do the nation's least attractive jobs were rounded up and deported. Yet when the supply of such workers is inexhaustible, as it now is, wages and living standards are driven down for legal employees.

Illegal immigrants who come forward under the McCain-Kennedy bill would, after a criminal background check and medical screening, be given a tamperproof ID containing biometric information that is extremely difficult to counterfeit. Companies that hire workers without verifying that they are in the country legally would face stiff fines.

Cracking down on unscrupulous employers who hire undocumented workers would, we believe, slow the rush over America's borders.

No one can be blamed for fleeing their native land in search of the freedom and economic opportunity America offers. In fact, such people are to be admired. But every nation must make meaningful attempts to secure its borders.

Whatever Chief Chamberlain intended, that was the main message in his arrest of Jorge Mora Ramirez.

DAILY JOURNAL (North East, MS): Immigration reforms 05/17
5/17/2005 12:57:21 AM
Daily Journal

The Daily Journal's week-long series of stories in 2004 about Hispanic immigrants - legal and illegal - in Northeast Mississippi documented the employment of illegals in some of our region's businesses.

That fact rises from a double economic self-interest: Immigrants come to Mississippi and other states looking for a better life, and businesses need to stay competitive in labor costs with increasing off-shore competition.

Last week, two high-profile senators representing usually opposite views on Capitol Hill proposed a new immigration law that could help even-out the immigration situation in Mississippi and other states.

Republican John McCain of Arizona and Democrat Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts introduced Thursday a proposed law that would create a new national immigration standard, especially related to thousands of illegals who live and work in the U.S.

President Bush introduced the idea for similar reforms in his first administration, and they went nowhere. Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., and former Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., also tried a similar bill in the last Congress.

In terms of bipartisanship, there's reason to hope the McCain-Kennedy bill might go farther in the pipeline, eventually becoming law in a form reasonably similar to what the two senators propose.

The bill would do several things that make sense for Mississippi and the rest of the country:

- It would require new investment in border security and technology;

- It would allow employers to hire foreigners under a temporary visa program if they prove they can't hire American workers for the same job;

- Visa-holders would be able to change jobs, would be able to apply for legal status and would be issued tamper-proof identification.

Many illegals now use fake Social Security numbers.

The bill would allow illegal immigrants to legalize their status but at considerable cost to each of them.

They would have to pay a substantial fine and pay back taxes, thus admitting wrongdoing and making recompense for it.

The bill's temporary visa permit would help prevent a new pool of illegal immigrants from arriving because it would become politically acceptable to fine those knowingly employing illegals.

It's estimated that 10 million illegal immigrants live in our nation, and not dealing with them automatically causes more lawbreaking by sanctioning the status quo of illegality.

Border state politicians, in particular, want meaningful changes. The problem grows every day in Mississippi because the flow of illegal immigrants, especially from Mexico and other Latin American nations, is constant.

The bill would deal both directly and indirectly with vexing national security issues related to our open borders with Mexico and Canada. Those borders can stay mostly open if people who have moved here illegally are controlled and, if necessary, expelled for violating immigration law.

The situation now is overwhelming in magnitude and enforceability.

America grew and prospered because of immigration. Some of the greatest American success stories of the past 150 years rise from the flow of immigrants, but that flow was documented and controlled even when enormous in numbers.

One element particularly should be included in any final version of the bill: McCain's and Kennedy's insistence that legal status require fluency in English, the language of everyday life, government and commerce in our country.

In an atmosphere increasingly hostile to bipartisanship, McCain and Kennedy have crafted a proposed law with huge potential benefit for our nation's safety and prosperity.

To join an online discussion of this topic, log on to www.djournal.com, or respond at opinion@djournal.com for publication as a letter to the editor.

THE DAILY NEWS (Longview, WA): Immigration policy requires push by Bush 09/16

09.16.05
p. A5

The rare piece of good news during this troubled summer was that tighter enforcement along our southern border seemed to be slowing the flow of illegal immigrants. But that modest success occasions more bad news:

U.S. growers, businesses and industries that count on a reliable supply of these undocumented workers are reporting serious labor shortages.

The need for a more rational immigration policy --- one that recognizes the critical role immigrant labor plays in this nation's economy --- has never been more apparent. More than half of the farm workers in the country are here illegally. Undocumented immigrants are filling jobs throughout the economy.

Congress has shown little enthusiasm for tackling this politically sensitive issue. While a number of immigration reform bills have been introduced in recent months, none has gained any traction. That's just as well with regard to some of the proposals, which would make a bad situation worse by merely pouring more money into enforcement. Others offer a more realistic blend of tough enforcement and an expanded guest-worker program.

The best of the lot is a bill introduced earlier this year by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. It would tighten enforcement, but also would create a large guest-worker program that put immigrants on a path to citizenship.

Many in Congress recoil at the notion of allowing workers who entered the country illegally to earn legal status and eventual citizenship. But a workable guest-worker program demands that possibility. Without it, large numbers of workers entering legally through the program can be expected to swell the ranks of some 11 million illegal immigrants as a permanent fixture of the U.S. workforce.

President Bush fully understands the need for a policy that shrinks this illegal population of workers and, at the same time, provides the inflow of legal workers that the country's economy has come to depend upon.

In an interview early this year with The Washington Times, Bush accurately described current immigration policy as a "bureaucratic nightmare." Bush added, "We've got people living in the shadows of our society, and we've got a border patrol that's overstressed because we've got people streaming across. The system has broken down."

Indeed, it has. And, given Congress' reluctance to come to grips with this problem, fixing immigration policy will almost certainly require a strong presidential push. It's time Bush put some muscle behind his enlightened rhetoric.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX): To the Front Burner: Congress should press ahead on immigration 06/16

12:06 AM CDT on Thursday, June 16, 2005

Sen. John Cornyn is keeping immigration reform front and center, holding six hearings this year on immigration with plans for a seventh next week.

But not everyone on Capitol Hill is so eager. Some Democrats and Republicans prefer to let the divisive issue just drag on.

What are they thinking? Americans need a policy that owns up to holes in our borders and grasps that parts of our economy rely on foreign workers.

Otherwise, terrorists could sneak into the country, while illegal immigrants remain pawns in an economic game.

Mr. Cornyn is trying to balance these goals. His earlier hearings concentrated on border security, while the next one will delve into foreign workers.

GOP Sen. John McCain and a bipartisan group of senators already have laid down a marker on that latter issue. The McCain team, which ranges from liberals like Sen. Ted Kennedy to conservatives like Rep. Jeff Flake, has presented an intriguing "guest worker" program.

It would allow 400,000 foreign workers annually to apply for a temporary visa to work here in selective industries such as agriculture. Applicants receiving such a visa could apply while working here to become permanent legal residents.

While in the end this may not be the best approach, it is an honest one. Few illegal immigrants are likely to apply for a guest worker program if they know they must *go home* before seeking permanent U.S. residency.

And what this country most needs is to bring illegal workers out of the shadows, so government can better keep terrorists at bay. That's easier to do if we know who has legal residency and who does not.

We hope Mr. Cornyn keeps these points in mind when he produces his own plan, which could come out by early July. Meanwhile, other members of Congress need the same sense of urgency that Mr. Cornyn and Mr. McCain are showing on this issue.

Too much delay and we'll remain stuck through the 2006 congressional races with border worries and a cruel system.

WHAT AMERICA NEEDS

Tighter borders
Realistic guest worker program
Immigration overhaul by mid-2006

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX): Overhauling Immigration: McCain's bill is best starting point for reform 07/31

Dallas Morning News
12:33 AM CDT on Sunday, July 31, 2005

Many Americans worry about the long, open stretches of the U.S. border between towns like Del Rio and El Paso. We understand why. Look at the headlines. Terrorism remains a fresh threat. And Mexican drug gangs are taking root in cities like Dallas.

What's more, America has 11 million illegal immigrants or more living undercover in states like Texas, California and Iowa. An estimated 450,000 more join them annually by sneaking across the Rio Grande or paying smugglers and risking their lives in the Arizona desert.

There's no end in sight, especially with the economies of Mexico and Central America struggling to provide enough decent-paying jobs. And the demand for foreign workers won't subside as long as Americans employ nannies, roofers and busboys from places like Guanajuato and San Salvador.

There are two ways to start to correct this problem. President Bush and Congress can put their emphasis on securing the borders with a workable visa plan that identifies foreign workers. Or they can focus largely on securing the border with more agents, guns and cameras.

As we read the bills, that's the primary difference between the immigration plans of GOP Sens. John McCain and John Cornyn. Mr. McCain emphasizes guest workers, while Mr. Cornyn concentrates on agents, guns and cameras.

Both men presented their proposals to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, and we applaud them for offering the most comprehensive overhauls of immigration laws in 20 years. The Judiciary Committee would be wise to act on these proposals before early October, so the full Senate can pass an immigration bill before Thanksgiving.

This editorial board largely favors Mr. McCain's approach because it emphasizes a visa plan that turns illegal immigrants into legal workers, thereby allowing federal agents to separate out those who might be trying to run drugs or import dirty bombs. Mr. Cornyn's plan also offers a visa proposal, but one that doesn't strike us as workable.

Here's how the two plans stack up and what the Senate should look for in its final legislation: Few subjects resonate as loudly here in North Texas as does illegal immigration. Rarely a day goes by that letter writers on this page aren't calling out for an overhaul. The McCain bill is the place to start building a realistic and humane solution. That's the plan Congress and the Bush administration need to get to work on.

No amnesty

First, let's get this straight: Neither John McCain nor John Cornyn is talking about a free pass for illegal immigrants. Their bills are not like the 1986 immigration measure that granted many illegal immigrants amnesty to stay in the U.S.

For starters, both senators would require workers to have a legal visa. And Mr. McCain would have illegal immigrants pay a $1,000 fine before securing a visa. He also would have them earn their right to citizenship. Those are fine ideas and do not constitute amnesty in any shape or form.

GOP Rep. Jeff Flake of Arizona, a conservative's conservative, emphasized that point in his Viewpoints column Thursday when he explained why he supports the McCain bill. And, as he wrote, the chatter about "lock 'em up and send 'em home" is nothing but rhetoric. There's no way the U.S. can round up 11 million illegal immigrants.

Guest workers

Why we back the McCain plan: Mr. McCain would allow illegal immigrants in the U.S. to receive a three-year visa if they have a job, pass a criminal background check and pay a large sum for the visa. If they want to become citizens after that, they must go to the back of the citizenship line and apply. (They could get visas twice, for a total of six years.)

Likewise, workers living abroad could apply for a three-year visa if they have a job and can afford the application fees. Once here, they, too, could begin the citizenship process by going to the end of the line. (They also could earn up to two, three-year visas.)

Why the Cornyn plan falls short: The Texan's bill would allow a foreign resident to earn a visa for two years, return home for a year and apply for another two-year visa. It's hard to see how immigrants – or their employers – would abide by all that zigzagging. It would interrupt their jobs and is likely to force workers to stay here illegally, rather than return home for a year.

Similarly, the Cornyn plan for illegal immigrants doesn't seem realistic. It gives them incentives to go home and apply for a visa to the U.S. But who's going to leave and then start applying for a visa, especially when they have a job that pays better than back home?

Securing the border

Where the plans agree:

Both senators would allow workers to enter the country with legal visas instead of coming across with smugglers. Border agents should love that. They could more easily know who's legal and who's not.

Why we back the Cornyn plan: It is stronger on border security. While 10,000 more border agents may be too many, given the electronic ID card's potential, some ramping up of agents makes sense. Mr. Cornyn is also right to ask for more money for cameras and other technologies to capture narcos and terrorists.

Why the McCain plan falls short:

It simply doesn't offer as much detail on this front. Its centerpiece is a "Border Security Advisory Committee" made up of "stakeholders." Pardon us, senator, but the border's way past needing another committee.
Involving other countries

Where the plans agree: Both offer specifics about getting Mexico and Canada to secure their borders. Mexico particularly has a challenge with illegal immigrants coming from places like El Salvador and Colombia, who then sneak across our borders. It's imperative that the Senate include this in final legislation.

Work-site enforcement

Where the plans agree:

The 1986 immigration law failed because the feds rarely fined employers who hire illegal immigrants. The McCain and Cornyn plans try to close this loop with the electronic ID card. Like border agents, employers can know right away whether job applicants are legal.

Why we back the McCain plan: While both plans include the ID card, worksite enforcement would have a greater chance to succeed under the McCain proposal because his guest worker plan is more likely to bring illegal immigrants out of the shadows and apply for the cards.

Why the Cornyn plan falls short:

The Cornyn plan includes 10,000 federal agents to police work sites. With a guest worker program in place and cards identifying legal workers, we won't have as many illegal workers who need rounding up and, thus, we shouldn't need a new massive squad of enforcement officers.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX): Deputizing the Border: It's better to look for a long-term solution 08/10

Wednesday, August 10, 2005

Houston Congressman John Culberson's frustrated. So are many Texans – including the members of this editorial board. But frustration won't solve America's immigration problem. Only a smart plan will get the job done.

Mr. Culberson's proposal doesn't meet that standard. The Republican wants to deputize civilians, arm them and let this militia serve alongside Border Patrol agents. His "Border Protection Corps" idea has the support of nearly 50 House colleagues.

We imagine it also resonates with plenty of Americans, including loads of Texans. The approximate 450,000 immigrants who come illegally into the country each year, particularly from Mexico, have inflamed many people – from ranchers along the Rio Grande to unemployed workers in Maine to anxious citizens worrying about terrorists slipping across the border. They argue that Americans wouldn't face this problem if authorities enforced the law.

Unfortunately, the answer's not so simple. "We have tripled the size of the Border Patrol and increased its budget tenfold," GOP Rep. Jeff Flake wrote recently on our Viewpoints page. "And still they come. Clearly, border enforcement alone won't solve our illegal immigration problem."

How true. If enforcement were the answer, it would have worked a long time ago. What will succeed is a sensible approach to legal immigration. Mr. Flake and GOP Sen. John McCain have one.

Their immigration bill would allow about 400,000 foreign workers annually to earn (and pay for) a three-year visa to work here legally. While here, they could begin to apply for citizenship.

We favor this approach because it could effectively maintain our borders. It takes the annual flow of illegal workers and gives them a chance to work here legally. That would reduce the need for would-be workers to sneak across the Rio Grande. It also would let border authorities focus on finding terrorists carrying a dirty bomb across our southern flank. Border agents could more easily nab them if fewer people are coming across illegally.

This approach is a better way to control our borders. And relieve everyone's frustration.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX): Feeling the Heat: Citizens are pushing the immigration fight 08/29

04:25 AM CDT on Monday, August 29, 2005

While politicians in Washington vacillate on immigration reform, those on the border's frontlines – state leaders, law enforcement officials, humanitarians and private citizens – seem to be out front in terms of urgency and frustration. Among the most recent examples that illustrate mounting alarm around our government's continued inaction:

•Last week, the Houston-based U.S. Border Watch group, with close ties to the Minuteman Project, made a pit stop in Dallas and videotaped clusters of day laborers and the license plates of those who picked them up. Whether this group was guided by the desire to secure those jobs for Americans or by racism, its activities point to the need for the federal government to step up before things get ugly.

•In Arizona, where a large number of immigrants die each year in the Sonoran Desert, the humanitarian group No More Deaths continued to aid those making the trek across the Rio Grande, even as law enforcement officials charge that the group is aiding and abetting illegal immigrants.

•Frustrated by illegal immigration, four California Republican lawmakers said they would introduce legislation to give Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger power to declare a state emergency, as governors in New Mexico and Arizona did this month. After declaring their border counties an emergency, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano freed more than $2 million to beef up law enforcement and buy equipment to help curb drug and human trafficking, kidnappings and murders.

With frustration at such a high pitch, it was encouraging to hear Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff acknowledge last week that the problem must be solved. "The American public is rightly distressed about a situation in which they feel we do not have the proper control over our borders," he said.

When Congress reconvenes after Labor Day, it will have some very good ideas in front of it for how to fix this mess. Our best thinking is to start with Arizona Sen. John McCain's guest worker program, which would allow foreign workers to apply for two three-year visas, and combine it with some of Texas Sen. John Cornyn's border security ideas, such as investing in more cameras.

Congress also would be wise to consider this: Willingness only matters when it's accompanied by action.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX): Back on the Hill: Roberts' chief justice nod raises the stakes 09/06

04:35 AM CDT on Tuesday, September 6, 2005

It would be understandable if members of Congress found it difficult to focus on other business with the nation's hearts and minds fixed on the human misery along the Gulf Coast. Certainly, the work ahead to restore some semblance of normalcy in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is a top agenda item for all lawmakers.

Then yesterday, just before leaving for his second inspection of the devastated region, President Bush made news on another front that also will require careful attention from the Congress: He announced he is nominating Judge John Roberts to replace William Rehnquist as chief justice of the United States.

Mr. Rehnquist's death Saturday night leaves two openings on the Supreme Court. President Bush said he moved quickly in selecting Mr. Roberts to the top job because it's in the best interests of the court and the nation to have a chief justice in place by Oct. 3, the first full day of the fall term. So now the Senate Judiciary Committee, already scheduled to begin confirmation hearings for the associate justice nominee, will consider Mr. Roberts for the court's most influential and important job.

Congress clearly has its hands full with the events of the past week, not to mention other critical issues already facing lawmakers. Here are some highlights of what is certain to be a politically charged autumn:

John Roberts

Mr. Bush's decision to nominate Mr. Roberts as chief justice raises the stakes for these confirmation hearings, which will not begin until after Mr. Rehnquist's funeral Wednesday and could be postponed into next week.

Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee owe it to America to thoroughly review Mr. Roberts' character, legal intellect and ability to lead the nation's highest court. What we do not need are the ritualistic partisan performances for the television cameras. Along those lines, we expect Texas Sen. John Cornyn, who has praised Mr. Roberts, to be actively involved as a tough questioner, not a cheerleader.

Without a doubt, Mr. Roberts is conservative and, judging from his writings, a convincing legal defender of Reagan administration policy. He has been through a Senate confirmation process before, and lawmakers found no compelling reason to doubt his ability to make the reasoned decisions that federal judges make.

The Supreme Court, however, is a lifetime appointment, so it's important the Judiciary Committee probe his legal interpretations on a variety of issues, including civil rights, employment policy, presidential powers, privacy, women's rights and property rights. We expect him to offer expansive answers and not shield his views behind the cloak of judicial impartiality.

At age 50, Mr. Roberts – particularly as chief justice – could help shape the court for decades. No work the Senate does this year will be more important than these hearings.

Patriot Act

As it stands now, the Senate version does a better job of protecting civil liberties in the midst of investigating terrorist threats than the House version. The Senate version, for example, includes a procedure for suspects to challenge orders for personal records and provides greater judicial oversight on personal records searches.

Both are integral safeguards.

And that's where we differ with the Bush administration, which backs the House version and contends the Senate's safeguards would make it too difficult for investigators to conduct secret searches, obtain "roving wiretaps" or gain access to business and library records.

Democracies survive on checks on government intrusion, a principle that the Senate has worked hard to protect and incorporate in its bill. Congress should renew the Patriot Act with the Senate's safeguards.

Social Security

What does Congress need to do on this front? Some things it needed to do a long time ago. Make the system solvent. Add personal accounts to secure the investment futures of average Americans. Do it in a way that doesn't defer the cost to future generations.

Returning Social Security to its original purpose – a safety net for the poorest working Americans – and adjusting benefits accordingly will keep it solvent. Creating personal accounts that allow workers to invest some Social Security contributions in stocks and bonds is another key part of comprehensive reform; Congress must be willing to press forward on this provision. And finally, Congress needs to finance the transition through revised Social Security taxes.

Social Security won't fix itself. Congress has to find the will to do it now.

Immigration reform

Mr. Cornyn has authored a bill whose cornerstone is tighter border security. Arizona Sen. John McCain and Rep. Jeff Flake say immigration reform should first settle the status of those already here illegally. The McCain bill would allow about 400,000 foreign workers a year to obtain three-year visas to work in the U.S. legally and begin to apply for citizenship.

Securing borders and acknowledging those already here are not mutually exclusive goals. Starting with the McCain bill and blending key features of the Cornyn legislation would devote law enforcement resources to a porous border that is a potential entry point for terrorists and acknowledge that the U.S. economy substantially benefits from the flow of foreign workers.

Congress must secure the borders and devise a guest-worker program that lifts those illegally in the United States from the shadows.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX): Beyond Rita and Roberts: Bush still has chance on immigration front 09/25

02:43 PM CDT on Sunday, September 25, 2005

Angry hurricanes and Supreme Court nominations have given President Bush enough worries. But it's encouraging that he remains intent on getting a new immigration law. The most recent evidence is that presidential aides keep meeting with key legislators, including GOP Rep. Jeff Flake of Arizona and GOP Sen. John Cornyn of Texas.

No Bush plan has emerged, but the administration apparently will try to marry a guest worker program for illegal immigrants with greater border security. *The Financial Times* reported as much last week, and a White House spokesperson confirms that this approach reflects the administration's principles.

We're heartened the president wants a two-fer solution. Some Republicans want only to tackle security issues. But Congress can't stop the flow of illegal immigrants without addressing the employment *and* security parts of the problem.

GOP Sen. John McCain and Mr. Flake have introduced the best guest worker program, which Mr. Bush would do well to follow. It provides incentives for the estimated 400,000 immigrants pouring across our borders each year to earn a three-year work visa, which would enable the U.S. government to document them and weed out security threats.

Equally crucial, their bill would allow immigrants with visas to start applying for U.S. citizenship. Yes, some cry "amnesty." But it's not. Immigrants with visas would have to go to the back of the line for citizenship requests. There's no blanket exemption.

What's more, the lure of citizenship would give immigrants an incentive to join a guest worker program. Without an inducement, they'll remain in the shadows. And Americans will be left with 11 million illegal immigrants.

On the security side of the equation, Mr. Cornyn has taken the lead. His plans for deploying greater technologies along the border particularly make sense. He wants more new border agents than are necessary, but the administration should generally heed the senator's ideas.

Given the day's headlines, Mother Nature and the Supreme Court will remain front-and-center. But here's hoping the president keeps pushing on immigration. It's another problem that worsens the longer Washington waits.

Read our comparison of GOP Sens. John McCain's and John Cornyn's immigration plans.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TX): Worker reform and security go hand in hand 10/22

09:12 AM CDT on Saturday, October 22, 2005

Visit the front lines.

All members of Congress should tour border states for a battlefield view of the losing fight against illegal immigration.

Maybe that would convince any doubters about the urgency of putting the immigration mess atop the nation's priority list.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist came to Texas just 10 days ago for a tour of the Rio Grande, courtesy of Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison. He saw the footprints of people in the country illegally – a number estimated at 11 million or more today.

Mr. Frist returned to Washington to attest to the border-security crisis and the need to get on with the debate. But he indicated a preference for a security-first approach that puts off worker-reform measures until later.

That would be the wrong approach – like trying to stop water from rolling downhill. It does no good to arrest those illegal-crossers whose footprints Mr. Frist saw if the job market still rewards the majority who get through.

Republican leadership in Congress should wake up to the fact that its own party understands the common sense of combining stricter enforcement with a guest-worker program.

In a new poll by the market-oriented Manhattan Institute, 78 percent of 800 likely Republican voters said they favored reform that combines better border security with a temporary-worker program and stiff fines for employers who break the law.

President Bush, a steady supporter of the comprehensive approach, joined in the tough talk himself recently by vowing to "return every single illegal entrant, with no exceptions."

And an exasperated Gov. Rick Perry called on the government to declare the border a "high-risk threat area" and allow law-enforcement money to flow to states. Workforce reform, he said, can come later.

No, it needs to come now, coupled with federal help for the border security the governor rightly seeks.

DENVER POST (CO): Odd cast boosts immigration reform 06/12

McCain-Kennedy bill is a solid launching pad for Congress' immigration debate. The subject carries social, economic and security implications.

DenverPost.com
Article Launched: 06/12/2005 01:00:00 AM

With an estimated 11 million or more illegal immigrants in the United States, it's clear that existing border policies have become a joke. They too often ignore the labor needs of the economy and, well, where do we begin about the lack of enforcement? The laws against illegal immigration and hiring undocumented workers are poorly enforced, when they are enforced at all.

Past efforts to update U.S. immigration laws have taken years. The task is among the most ticklish and difficult facing Congress, with social and economic ramifications along with diplomatic and domestic security impacts.

Some weeks ago, a serious effort to tackle the immigration headache was launched by Sens. John McCain, a border state Republicans, and Ted Kennedy, a Northeast liberal. This odd duck authorship represents the need to forge a broad consensus. Indeed, McCain-Kennedy is a rational approach that holds much promise if calm heads can prevail over demagoguery.

The McCain-Kennedy bill is in synch with many of President Bush's immigration-reform ideas, which increases the likelihood of success. (Also, the word out of Washington is the president now supports concepts he once opposed, such as not requiring illegal immigrants to return home to gain legal status.)

"It's certainly the most ambitious formulation that we've seen," said Doris Meissner of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, "and it really does take on the broad sweep of the issues." Meissner, director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service under President Clinton, said McCain- Kennedy will "help focus the discussion. It creates something specific against which to really have a debate" and "probably will go through several iterations" before reaching the Senate floor. She also observed the White House was "amazingly mum about McCain-Kennedy when it was introduced."

In contrast, Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Littleton, gave the bill both barrels. He ripped border security provisions as "little more than commissioning of a few more government reports and working groups," and said, "The rest of the bill is dedicated to things like providing taxpayer-funded health care and instant amnesty for millions of illegal aliens who have broken our laws."

True, the bill proposes legitimizing the status of illegal workers currently in the U.S. They would have to pay $2,000 in fines, as well as back taxes, and pass criminal background checks and medical exams. These immigrants could then apply for three-year guest-worker visas, renewable once. After six years, the workers would be eligible to apply for permanent resident status for themselves and their families, and, after five more years, U.S. citizenship.

The bill would allow U.S. employers to hire up to 400,000 foreign workers the first year on a showing that no residents would take the jobs. These workers also eventually could become permanent residents.

Other provisions include electronically verifiable identity cards for the guest workers and doubled fines for employers who knowingly hire newly arrived illegal immigrants.

Despite its bipartisan support, McCain- Kennedy faces an uphill fight on both sides of the aisle: from Republicans opposed to any form of amnesty and from Democrats who fear cheap foreign labor will depress domestic wages.

McCain-Kennedy is a reasonable springboard to debate the many tough issues that are raised by U.S. immigration policy.

DES MOINES REGISTER (IA): Lead the debate on immigration, Iowa 08/28

Published August 28, 2005

If Iowa wants to grow, welcoming newcomers from other countries is the best hope.

The numbers are irrefutable: Births of Hispanic babies in the state rose 358 percent between 1990 and 2004, while births of non-Hispanic babies dropped 8 percent, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health.

That's just one of the reasons why Iowans should urge the president and Congress to establish a sensible national immigration policy.

That policy should recognize that controlling illegal immigration will require a broad guest-worker program and a clear path to citizenship as well as tighter border security.

Then, immigration authorities could focus their attention on the potential for terrorists to slip in rather than spending so much time hunting down people who merely want to work.

The current immigration system is clearly broken, as evidenced by the estimated 11 million immigrants in the United States without documentation. Meanwhile, American businesses depend on their labor.

Erecting a 10-foot-tall chain-link fence topped with razor wire, as proposed by U.S. Rep. Steve King of Iowa at an immigration forum last week, won't keep out people desperate to earn a living. But it would set a terrible tone for a nation that considers itself a beacon of freedom.

After stumbling in his first term by signing into law the bill making English the state's official language, Gov. Tom Vilsack is setting the right tone. He's speaking out on the value of bringing diversity to Iowa, as he did recently to employees of the Principal Financial Group. And he's set up the New Iowan Centers to offer people help in finding work and connecting with other services.

Two of the centers opened in 2000, in Muscatine and Sioux City, and a third in Ottumwa in 2002. An $850,000 federal grant will expand services in Ottumwa and create centers in Des Moines, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids and Council Bluffs.

Most of Iowa's new immigrants are Hispanic. A new U.S. Census Bureau estimate released this month showed the state's Hispanic population has surpassed 100,000.

But an official count is not needed to see that Hispanics are increasingly part of life in communities all over Iowa, in the workplace, out shopping or in church. Some are new business owners and professionals, but many are in low-paying jobs.

School enrollment can perhaps best predict the future. Take the 1,239-student Hampton-Dumont district in north-central Iowa. In the seven years Lee Morrison has been superintendent, Hispanic enrollment has grown from about 9 percent to 20 percent, he said. Kindergarten classes this school year are nearly a third Hispanic.

Hispanic families long worked at the area's plant nurseries, Morrison said. Today, some work in chicken houses and hog confinements, and others travel as far away as Charles City, a 45-minute drive.

Besides teaching English as a second language, the district provides interpreters for parent-teacher conferences. And a teacher associate works half-time as an interpreter to enhance community relations, such

as translating notes sent to and from school. "It's a changing time out here," Morrison said.

Statewide, Hispanic students made up 5.4 percent of public-school enrollment last school year.

Pressure is building for Washington to do something. Fed up with porous border security and immigration-related crime, the governors of New Mexico and Arizona have declared a state of emergency along the U.S.-Mexican border. Every state, including Iowa, has witnessed heartbreaking examples of exploitation, such as the 11 decomposed bodies discovered inside a rail car near Denison in 2002, months after it left Matamoros, Mexico.

President Bush proposed a temporary-worker program in 2004. This spring, Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts introduced legislation that would provide undocumented immigrants already in the country a way to get temporary legal status for six years and permanent residence eventually.

The existing look-the-other-way approach to immigration encourages people to risk their lives to come here, while pretending that, if only enforcement were stricter, the 2,000-mile border could be sealed.

The nation needs better border security. Our economy - and states such as Iowa - needs immigrants to grow. Iowa's governor and congressional delegation should help lead a national debate to devise an immigration policy that's both realistic and humane.

EL DIARIO/LA PRENSA (NYC): Kennedy- McCain Immigration Bill 06/15
June 15, 2005

It`s time to get the ball rolling on one of the most promising proposals for immigration reform. The Kennedy-McCain bill, (the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act), if passed, is the solution for many immmigrants to become American citizens. The bill will alleviate countless problems and is needed for the more than 1.2 million illegal and legal immigrants in America, however, it still stands in both the house and senate.

After months of debate and negotiation, Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain came to a decision on the terms of the bill along with congressmen Kolbe (R-AZ), Flake (R-AZ) and Gutierrez (D-IL). First, the USA would accept at least 400,000 foreign workers each year and provide them with three year visas. For the more than 10 million undocumented immigrants that are already in America, they would have to register, pay a $2,000 fine, clear a background check, pass an english exam and possibly also pay back taxes. The act would also increase fines for employers who hire undocumented immigrants, allow workers to change employers and fully protect them under labor laws. The act would also increase border enforcement and control.

The bill allows hardworking immigrants to live and work in the United States while paying taxes. This will improve their chances to achieve residence and eventually citizenship. Not only does the bill apply to the individual, but also their family members. Divided familes and lack of citizenship continue to be large problems for immigrants trying to make a living.

American legislators have finally realized the importance of immigrants in America. This teamed up with the DREAM act, which will make undocumented immigrant students eligible for subsidized in-state tuition, are improving immigrant status in America.

We urge the house and senate to pass this bill as it will help millions of immigrants obtain citizen status.

EL DIARIO/LA PRENSA (NYC): La legislación de Kennedy McCain 06/15
2005-06-15
Es hora de impulsar una de las más prometedoras propuestas para la reforma de inmigración. El proyecto legislativo Kennedy McCain (*the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act*) si es aprobado, será la solución para que muchos inmigrantes se conviertan en ciudadanos estadounidenses. Dicha propuesta aliviará numerosos problemas y es una necesidad para cerca de 1.2 millón de inmigrantes legales e ilegales. Sin embargo, la misma todavía sigue en manos de la Cámara y el Senado.

Tras meses de debates y negociaciones, los senadores Ted Kennedy y John McCain decidieron los términos del proyecto de ley con la ayuda de los congresistas Kolbe (R-AZ), Flake (R-AZ) y Gutiérrez (D-IL). Primeramente, EE.UU. aceptaría como mínimo 400 mil trabajadores extranjeros cada año, a quienes proveerían con un visa válida por tres años. Los más de 10 millones de inmigrantes indocumentados actualmente en Estados Unidos, tendrían que registrarse, pagar una multa de $2,000, someterse a un chequeo de antecedentes penales, aprobar un examen de inglés y posiblemente pagar impuestos atrasados al estado.

La ley también aumentaría las multas para los empleadores que contraten indocumentados; permitirá que los trabajadores puedan cambiar de patrones y se les protegerá bajo las leyes laborales. Todo ello reforzará el control y vigilancia de las fronteras.

La legislación permite a inmigrantes que trabajan duro a permanecer en los Estados Unidos mientras pagan sus impuestos. Esto elevará sus oportunidades de obtener una residencia y eventualmente la ciudadanía. No

sólo la medida aplica al individuo, sino también a los miembros de su familia. Familias divididas y falta de ciudadanía continúa siendo un gran problema para inmigrantes que tratan de ganarse la vida.

Los legisladores americanos han comprendido la importancia de los inmigrantes para América. Esto se une al *DREAM act*, que hará a estudiantes indocumentados elegibles para recibir becas subsidiadas por el estado, mejorando el estatus del inmigrante en el país.

Urgimos que la Cámara y el Senado aprueben este proyecto de ley para ayudar a que millones de inmigrantes aseguren su estatus de ciudadanía.

EL DIARIO/LA PRENSA (NYC): Time to move on immigration reform 09/05

September 22, 2005

The Kennedy-McCain bill, formally called the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, is a sound proposal for immigration reform in this country. President George W. Bush has been saying for years that he wants to fix the immigration system. Here is his opportunity to get it done.

The bill balances the human rights of immigrants with this country's need for immigrant labor, national security and orderly immigration. Introduced by Senators Ted Kennedy, a Democrat, and John McCain, a Republican, the bill has strong bipartisan support in Washington. The bill would significantly increase the number of immigrants allowed into the country, calling for the U.S. to accept at least 400,000 foreign workers each year and provide them with three year visas.

Immigrants who are already in the country illegally would have to pay a fine and clear a background check, but then would have the opportunity to apply for a visa, permanent resident status and eventually, citizenship. Often abused by unscrupulous employers, immigrant workers would be protected by U.S. labor laws.

Border enforcement and controls also would increase significantly. The act also calls for an increase in fines for employers who hire undocumented immigrants.

The Kennedy-McCain bill is a departure from the politics of fear that so often surrounds the subject of immigration in this country. The bill strikes a balance between 21st Century safety and security needs and the importance of immigrants and immigrant labor in our society. Indeed, in recent days several states including California have reported a shortage of agricultural workers to pick the nation's crops this fall.

We call on President Bush to put the power of the White House behind this bill, and we call on our Representatives and Senators in Washington, D.C., to approve this important legislation.

EAST VALLEY TRIBUNE (Mesa/Scottsdale, AZ): Extremists must not be allowed to hijack immigration proposal 05/13

May 13, 2005
Tribune Editorial

With the introduction of bipartisan immigration-reform legislation on Thursday, maybe, just maybe, we can get some action on this serious, festering issue.

National security is at stake due to our porous southern border. So is continued healthy economic growth that historically has depended upon a reasonable flow of immigrants. The rule of law, in tatters from the spotty enforcement of immigration laws and woefully inadequate documentation requirements for employment status, also is at stake.

Legislation unveiled on Thursday by members of Arizona's congressional delegation and others addresses all of these critical issues. It toughens border enforcement, creates a guest worker program, levies penalties on illegal immigrants and strengthens identification requirements for employment.

This legislation won't satisfy extremists that for too long have held workable immigration reform hostage. Those on the far left have charged that clamping down on illegal immigration is unnecessary at best and racist at worst. Those on the far right have opposed a guest worker program as unnecessary and demanded prosecution or deportation of even gainfully employed illegal immigrants.

Thankfully, there are many Democrats and Republicans who've shunned the extremes — including Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., U.S. Reps. Jeff Flake and Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., and Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill., who are cosponsors of the reform legislation. President Bush, Gov. Janet Napolitano, U.S. Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., and other prominent officials from both parties also have voiced strong support for reforms that include the elements cited above.

Let the debate begin on this legislation. But let the debate center on the details: the size of the guest worker program, penalties for illegal immigrants as well as employers who knowingly hire them, how many new Border Patrol officers to add to ensure border security. Don't allow the debate to be hijacked by those of either extreme who refuse to embrace its key tenets.

That would lead only to further inaction. And as residents of a border state where the pressure cooker of illegal immigration has been building for too long, that is unacceptable. Action is needed — the kind of multi-pronged, practical action contained in this legislation. Congress and the president simply cannot allow it to stall.

THE ECONOMIST (London): The best solution so far to one of America's thorniest problems 05/21

Lexington
May 21, 2005

ON THE BORDER
The best solution so far to one of America's thorniest problems

THERE are many reasons for moderate pragmatists to be irritated by the culture wars that are consuming American politics. They are polarising an already polarised electorate; they are reigniting the politics of personal destruction; and they are filling the airwaves with mind-numbing debates about filibusters. But the biggest reason is that they are diverting attention from other pressing problems.

Immigration is a good example. There is no doubt that America's system is badly broken, with, perhaps, 10m immigrants working in the country illegally and another 1m arriving every year; there is equally no doubt that this imposes huge costs on the country in terms of lawlessness and human misery. On May 12th, two powerful senators, Ted Kennedy and John McCain, proposed a sensible solution. Yet their arguments risk being lost in the babble about John Bolton and judges.

America's present immigration law flies in the face of economic reality. The economy is creating far more low-end jobs than American workers are willing to take (the proportion of native-born Americans dropping out of high school has fallen from half in 1960 to just 10% today). Entire industries - agriculture, food-processing, construction - rely on cheap immigrant labour. But America's yearly quotas are far too small to satisfy its needs.

The resulting black economy undermines the rule of law. Check into a hotel, and you may be the beneficiary of a complex chain of law breaking. The hotel owner may have hired illegal immigrants. The valet-parker may have paid $ 2,000 to be smuggled across the border by a criminal gang. Several of his friends may have died trying to get in (last year 200 immigrants, including a three-year-old child, died in the Arizona desert). The criminal gang may have engaged in shoot-outs with immigration officials or rival gangs. His $ 2,000 fee may have been used to subsidise drug-smuggling. Tamar Jacoby, a Manhattan Institute scholar who is a beacon of light in a foggy debate, likens the current immigration laws to prohibition: impossible to enforce, they encourage a whole sub-culture of criminality.

The black economy also threatens two things pretty much all Americans hold dear. The first is the cherished tradition of assimilation. Illegal immigrants live in a shadow world where they are reluctant to put down roots and even visit their children's schools. The other is national security. The easiest way for a terrorist to enter the country without a trace is through Arizona. Forget about visas and background checks. All you need to do is hire a coyote: he will smuggle you across the border, no questions asked, and then plug you into a criminal network that specialises in giving people false identities and hiding them in a huge illegal sub-culture.

The Kennedy-McCain bill is the result of ten months of hard slog. The two senators were still hammering out the details the day before they unveiled their plan. But the product is a hard-nosed law that tries to align America's immigration laws to the economic realities without rewarding illegal behaviour.

The bill provides both illegal workers and law-breaking employers with a ladder out of the shadow world they now inhabit. Illegal workers will be allowed to apply for temporary work permits (which will not be tied to specific jobs, as in earlier schemes). And employers will be allowed to hire immigrant workers if they can demonstrate that no Americans want their jobs. But at the same time the bill avoids being soft on illegal

immigration. Any illegal immigrants in the country will pay hefty fines, as well as their back taxes, and go to the back of the queue for green cards. Employers will also face much stricter penalties. Money will be pumped into border security and a new system of tamper-proof identity cards.

Jumping over the congressional barrier

Plenty of people on both sides of the spectrum want to stop this bill. The AFL-CIO union combine has declined to endorse it. A mainly Republican anti-immigration caucus in the House contains around 70 diehards united behind the idea "What part of illegal don't you understand?"; they have just demonstrated their legislative muscle by pushing through a bill that makes it harder for illegals to get driving licences. John Cornyn, the chairman of the Senate sub-committee on immigration, has made it clear that he's opposed to any bill with a "work and stay" provision. Meanwhile, the White House, which has been badly burned on Social Security reform, is reluctant to spend significant amounts of political capital on an issue that so divides Republicans.

Yet immigration reformers also have muscle on their side. Employers' groups and some unions are behind the bill. So are many border-state politicians who know the status quo means chaos. And there is the clout of the two sponsors. Mr Kennedy remains the most determined legislative warhorse in the Senate. Mr McCain is a charismatic reformer with a broad constituency (particularly in the media). Both men are past masters at pushing complicated bipartisan legislation through Congress, including far-reaching reforms of education and campaign finance. They have already recruited Joe Lieberman and Sam Brownback.

The reformers' most important ally, though, is common sense. America has spent millions of dollars trying to tighten up its borders only to see the situation get worse. It now relies on illegal workers to pick its vegetables and build its buildings. Closing the border is impossible without some sort of legalisation for the millions in the country; mass deportation would do irreparable harm both to America's economy and to its traditions as an immigrant-friendly nation.

The problem for Messrs Kennedy and McCain is that common sense needs the oxygen of publicity if it is to breathe. And for the moment all that oxygen is being consumed by tedious debates about the virtues of filibusters.

THE ECONOMIST (London): America's border troubles, north and south 08/25
Aug 25th 2005
From The Economist Global Agenda

A furore is growing over borders in North America. Can the United States guard the homeland, protect trade with Canada and Mexico and not antagonise its two crucial neighbours at the same time?

ASK an American journalist or politician about foreign policy, and he will probably talk about Iraq, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, or perhaps development and trade. But a recent survey by *Foreign Affairs* magazine and Public Agenda, a non-governmental organisation, found that the average American thinks there is more to it than that. For Joe Sixpack, two of the top foreign-policy issues are protecting American jobs and fighting illegal immigration, something he takes far more seriously than the elites that claim to represent him.

And these two issues come together with extra urgency on America's two long borders, with Canada and Mexico. The summer has been a hot one, politically as well as out in the sun. Earlier this year, groups of self-styled American "Minutemen" announced their intention to police the Mexican border in areas where America's official border patrol was unwilling or unable to do so. To many, the initiative smacked of dangerous vigilantism. But a wave of drug-related crime crossing into America has made many others support the Minutemen. The American ambassador in Mexico recently closed the consulate in the border city of Nuevo Laredo in protest against the crime surge, and two state governors in America's south-west, Bill Richardson of New Mexico and Janet Napolitano of Arizona, have declared states of emergency. This led Michael Chertoff, the secretary of homeland security, to announce new border measures this week, saying Americans are "rightly distressed".

But the Americans are not the only ones who are concerned. Ask any Mexican politician what his country's foreign-policy priority must be, and the response is the same: maintain good relations with the United States and improve the lot of migrants headed north. Mexicans are annoyed that Americans mix up the questions of drug-related violence and economically motivated migration. With the former, it is American demand for drugs that encourages Mexican criminals to supply them, bringing crime and associated ills. This is just as much a problem, if not more, in Mexico itself. But America's insistence on prohibition, and the heavy penalties it imposes even on possessors and smokers of cannabis, mean that the problem is unlikely to dwindle soon.

The other issue is economic migration. Though Americans see Mexican migrants as a threat to American jobs, the common response is that they do tasks—domestic housework, picking fruit and the like—that Americans are unwilling to do. Indeed, many industries rely on this cheap labour. And Mexicans are ever willing to supply it. A poll by the Pew Hispanic Centre found that 46% of Mexicans would move to the United States given the chance. Some 124,000 illegal immigrants have been caught in the Yuma sector of the Arizona border alone since last October, a 46% increase on the same period a year before. Americans are at least right to see the border-control system as out of control.

Mr Chertoff's plans go beyond beefing up physical security such as guards, cameras and sensors. He also wants to increase the number of detention beds and immigration judges nearby. This will make it easier and quicker to question and return illegal immigrants who, under the current system, often slip away if there is nowhere to keep them during their processing.

The presidents of both countries agree on a partial solution. George Bush and Vicente Fox would like to regularise the papers of many of those illegals already working in the United States. But a potent nativist strain in Mr Bush's Republican Party has kept this idea from making any progress. Mr Chertoff's wall-builders,

guards and judges will be left trying to stick their fingers in the dyke's many holes. The only real solution is more economic development in Mexico, but that is a long-term prospect.

Blame America

America's relationship with its northern neighbour has been thornier of late as well—though here the problem, as many see it, is the opposite of that down south: too few Canadians and Americans crossing the border. In the past, when the Canadian dollar surged—as it has again recently—Canadians crossed the border in huge numbers looking for cheap and varied goods, from groceries to cars. Such a flood has failed to materialise during the current rise of the "loonie", as Canadians call their dollar. And even more Americans have failed to visit Canada than the loonie's strength would normally have caused them to do in the past.

Some of the lack of cross-border enthusiasm has non-political causes, such as more cheap American retailers setting up in Canada. American plans to require its citizens to show a passport or other approved document when going to Canada or Mexico, currently being phased in, will only turn more people off travelling. But other issues on which Americans and Canadians tend to disagree—gay marriage, cannabis, Iraq—also play a role. Americans cite Canadian anti-Americanism as a reason why they do not head north more. Greg Hermus of the Canadian Tourism Research Institute, an industry body, has studied the issue from both sides and says Canadians have similar fears about American attitudes. "Both sides feel less welcome in the other country."

In an age of global terrorism, America is surely right to be more defensive of its borders. But its neighbours see its policies on foreign affairs, drugs and immigration as arrogant or needlessly antagonistic. Though commerce has boomed since America, Canada and Mexico signed the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, America's relationship with China shows that trade does not equal friendship. Changing attitudes—in all three countries—are in danger of becoming permanent.

EL PASO TIMES (TX): Immigration: Security must be balanced with sensitivity 07/05
July 5, 2005

Sometimes it's a bit difficult to discern what's going on with immigration reform in Washington, D.C.

Reconfiguring the nation's immigration procedures is, by almost anyone's admission, something that is very necessary -- vital, in fact. And after President Bush took office for his first term, it looked as if something was going to be done fairly quickly.

But after the tragedies of 9/11, immigration problems took a back seat to more pressing security matters. Back seat? It was more like immigration reform dropped out of sight.

Reform ideas, mostly insubstantial mutterings about a guest-worker program, have surfaced since then, but haven't resulted in much. However, now it appears that Congress might be ready to go after some reforms with substantive plans. That's welcome.

Possibly this new push was brought on, or at least encouraged, by the Minutemen's activities along the southern border. Although having untrained and sometimes armed civilians patrolling the border wasn't, and still isn't, a good idea, at least it serves to bring attention to the problems we have with immigration and lack of enforcement.

One proposal actually was brought up in May, a bipartisan effort by two senators, Massachusetts Democrat Edward Kennedy and Arizona Republican John McCain.

In McCain's floor statement about the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005, taken from his Web site, he said, "I would like to mention some startling statistics that demonstrate the critical need for immigration reform. I think the numbers speak for themselves:
-- "Over 300 people died last year trying to cross the border -- about 200 of those deaths occurred in Arizona's desert.
-- "Last year 1.1 million illegal immigrants were caught by the Border Patrol and 51 percent of those were caught in Arizona.
-- "The Border Patrol is currently apprehending over 1,000 undocumented immigrants a day in Arizona.
-- "According to the FBI, an increasing number of these individuals are OTMs (Other Than Mexicans) from "countries of interest."

And, according to Knight Ridder News Service, GOP Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Jon Kyl of Arizona are "weeks away" from revealing a similar measure. The major difference seems to be that Cornyn-Kyl would have participants eventually return to their home countries, while Kennedy-McCain would aim toward eventual citizenship.

Cornyn-Kyl legislation also embraces more security measures, such as 10,000 more Border Patrol agents in the next five years.

The Pew Hispanic Center says that the population of undocumented immigrants is now about 11 million. Is immigration reform needed? You bet.

However, reform must be accomplished not only with an eye toward security, but also with sensitivity to the human and humane issues involved. There will be lots of debate about this issue, and there must be, because that's how an equitable plan will be forged.

FINANCIAL TIMES (London): Taking political risks 09/21

Published: September 21 2005 03:00 | Last updated: September 21 2005 03:00

News that President George W. Bush is likely to press ahead with reform of US immigration laws is remarkable in several respects. In the poisonously partisan political climate his administration has done so much to create, the proposals command some cross-party support, while sharply dividing Republicans in Congress and in the country. Equally, as his leadership ratings plummet in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and flagship measures such as Social Security reform flounder, it is surprising Mr Bush is willing to expend political capital on an unpopular cause.

Immigration in the US is now at levels not seen for a century. Since the last significant reform in 1986, which offered amnesty to about 3m undocumented workers, the number of illegal immigrants working in the US has more or less tripled to an estimated 10m. The US economy's seemingly limitless appetite for cheap workers consistently trumps government attempts to crack down on illegal entrants.

Mr Bush took office with the express intent of reaching a wide-ranging agreement with Mexico over immigration but had got nowhere when the September 11 2001 al-Qaeda attacks created a different set of concerns about America's porous borders. Yet, so long as demand for low-wage labour persists at this level, some legal way will have to be found to deal with it. All the more so as a sense of panic over illegal immigrants takes a grip on US public opinion, with vigilantes stalking the frontier with Mexico and some border states declaring states of emergency.

Mr Bush's proposals, outlined to a small group of Republican congressmen last week, in essence would allow illegal immigrants already in the country to become legal guest-workers. But they would be forced to leave after six years and re-apply to return.

There are problems with most approaches to immigration. As not only the US but countries such as Spain have found, amnesties tend to become magnets attracting new inflows of illegal workers. But, to his credit, Mr Bush's plan is closer to a bi-partisan proposal already on the table than a rival scheme for draconian penalties against workers and employers and a semi-militarisation of US borders.

The first bill - backed by, among others, senators John McCain and Ted Kennedy as well as business and immigrants' rights groups - does toughen penalties and reinforce border security. But, crucially, as well as an annual guest-worker quota it envisages mechanisms to give legal residence to many illegal immigrants, albeit after hefty fines and long waits.

That is surely nearer to America's proud tradition of embracing the huddled immigrant masses. Yet the immediate test is whether Mr Bush will persist with his own, more limited, plan from which he would appear to derive no obvious political benefit. It is not just the immigration numbers he has to worry about.

FORT WAYNE NEWS SENTINEL (IN): The lure of America 08/18

Managing immigration is vital when 40 percent of Mexicans say they'd like to come here.

August 18, 2005

It's flattering when neighbors love your home, but when they make it known that they want to move in, it's time to watch the back door more closely.

That's the position of the United States in relation to Mexico. The continuing migration of Mexicans to the U.S., many of whom come here illegally, has just made Texas the fourth state in the U.S. in which Anglos are a minority of the population. (California, New Mexico and Hawaii are the others).

But the appeal of the U.S. to Mexicans is even stronger than we might guess. A survey by the Pew Hispanic Center indicates that more than 40 percent of Mexican adults would come to the U.S. if they had the means and the opportunity. More than 50 percent said they would like to come to the U.S. under the kind of guest-worker program favored by President Bush, even if that meant that they had to return to Mexico after several years. And about 20 percent are inclined to come here, even if they have to do so illegally. Even 35 percent of college students in Mexico, who presumably look forward to some of the best opportunities there, say they would go to the U.S. if means and opportunity were available.

It's not surprising that Mexicans not to mention Africans, Asians and Central and South Americans want to come to the U.S. We fret over gas prices, federal budget deficits and the real-estate bubble, but the opportunities here look rich indeed for many of the world's people.

The U.S. should continue welcoming immigrants. The unskilled are willing to do tedious or taxing or even dangerous work that many native-born Americans won't do. The skilled among our immigrants staff hospitals, engineer new products and teach in our universities. The children and grandchildren of all these immigrants will have the chance to better themselves and their families. That's how America has built its society and strengthened its human resources for five centuries.

The catch is that we should welcome legal immigrants. The country can certainly benefit from allowing even more skilled, educated immigrants to settle here, and it probably needs more unskilled workers, too. But that doesn't mean the United States should throw open its borders and welcome every person on Earth who sees opportunity here. Abandoning all immigration control would allow criminals and even terrorists easy entry along with the hard-working people who would help themselves and the United States. And if too many people arrive too quickly, the opportunity they all seek would diminish.

The Pew Hispanic Center reported that an estimated 11 million immigrants, most of them Latinos, live in the U.S. illegally. Already that population of undocumented aliens puts great strain on health care, social services and education in the United States. What if another 40 million Mexicans (roughly 40 percent of Mexico's population) were to arrive here?

There's no instant solution. Federal and state governments don't have the manpower to find, detain and deport every illegal alien in the U.S. And there are powerful constituencies who don't want to see the tide of immigration turned back, such as businesses that employ illegal immigrants.

But at least we ought to quit making it easier for adult illegal immigrants to settle into life here. One example: Illegal immigrants don't need legally recognized driving privileges and driver's licenses issued by the very governments that ought to be sending them back home.

There are some encouraging signs. The Pew survey itself uncovered some. It turns out that Latinos born in the U.S., while they strongly favor legal immigration, are more hardnosed about illegal immigrants. Sixty percent of them said that states should not issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants.

One thing Americans shouldn't do is let reflexive anti-immigrants, whose opposition to open borders seems driven by simple prejudice, dominate the debate over immigration.

At any point in American history, there have been native-born Americans who thought that new arrivals were bound to ruin the nation. Through much of the 19th century, the Irish took the brunt of this prejudice. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jews, Italians and eastern Europeans posed the purported perils to the nation.

Time showed each wave of anti-immigrant fear to be unfounded. America has grown to encompass the descendents of all these groups and more, and it's grown stronger in the bargain. Today's immigrants can help create a better future for the country, too. The key is not shutting off immigration, but managing it, so that neither the native-born nor the newcomers are overwhelmed.

What kids are speaking

Children enrolled in Fort Wayne Community Schools come from homes where a total of more than 70 languages are spoken. The top languages spoken in homes, other than English, and the numbers of FWCS students who speak them are:

Spanish 2,149
Serbo-Croation 162
Burmese 162
Vietnamese 109
Mon (Thailand) 51
Arabic 44
Bosnian 42
Laotian 38
Russian 36

Source: Fort Wayne Community Schools

By Bob Caylor for the editorial board

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM (TX): Beside the golden door 10/20

Star-Telegram
October 20, 2005

The United States, which long has prided itself on being a land of immigrants, finds itself in a classic conundrum concerning those who have come here seeking political and economic refuge.

That impressive symbol of liberty standing in New York Harbor, beckoning to the world's "tired" and "poor" and "wretched refuse" and "homeless, tempest-tost," seems contradicted by a growing sentiment to halt the flow of those "huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

The swell of illegal immigration in this country, estimated at about 11 million undocumented residents, is producing a backlash that has resulted in growing domestic protests, private border patrols and a slew of proposed legislation to combat a problem that cannot be easily fixed.

In addition to vigorous enforcement of existing laws, including those that punish employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, something more drastic, more creative and more practical must be done to stop the mass influx from our southern borders in particular, to address the needs of industries that depend on the labor of undocumented workers and to bring the illegal immigrant out of society's shadows.

Lawmakers in Washington have proposed numerous solutions -- everything from the draconian to the naive.

Some want a massive roundup and deportation, while others recommend prison time and harsh fines for illegal immigrants or erecting miles of fencing along the border.

The Bush administration, which came into office with this issue (and better relations with Mexico) as a top priority, put the matter on hold after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. This week, with appearances before Congress by two Cabinet members, the administration has reintroduced its guest worker plan, along with proposals for tighter border security and more aggressive enforcement inside the country.

Under the president's revised plan, illegal immigrants would be able to apply to work in the country for six years, pay a substantial fine and then return to their native land. The guest workers would not be placed on a path to U.S. citizenship.

A proposal by Sens. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and John McCain, R-Ariz., would permit immigrants to remain in the country after paying a $2,000 fine, and the workers would be able to apply for permanent residency and eventually U.S. citizenship.

The problem is so big, and the proposed solutions so varied, that Congress isn't likely to do anything about it this year. It is also doubtful that anything will get done next year -- except for political grandstanding -- as the country prepares for midterm elections.

This crucial issue needs immediate and productive action. But Congress and the administration must not approach it piecemeal. There must be a comprehensive plan that addresses the issues of the workers and their families, an economy that has come to depend on many of them, the constant breaching of our borders, and the economics of Latin America that are a huge part of the problem.

The Bush administration is right to put something on the table for consideration, but the president must now push Congress to get to work seriously on the matter rather than just use the issue as political fodder during a campaign season.

GEORGETOWN (Univ.) VOICE (DC): A healthier immigration debate 09/01
September 1, 2005

In recent months, the national debate on illegal immigration has reached a level of intensity that has lead some pundits to predict the issue will rival gay marriage or abortion in sheer controversy. Georgetown students should take a reasoned stand on this issue and not fall back on a knee-jerk partisan response. Despite the urgency of the immigration problem, neither the outspoken conservative viewpoint nor the silence of the left provide solutions; rather, immigration can become a true consensus issue.

It is hard to deny there is a crisis of illegal immigration; it is harder to prove that this immigration has a negative effect on the U.S. economy or culture. Due to heavy restrictions on visas-only 5000 workers are allowed to cross legally every year-immigrants flood illegally over our porous, sandy southern border to find jobs. Arizona and New Mexico have declared states of emergency, and now the speaker of the California

Assembly is calling for a similar declaration there. Vigilante groups like the Minutemen have declared the border their turf, and make the crossing more dangerous for the Border Patrol and illegals alike.
In reality, illegal immigrants aren't hurting the American economy. The four states most affected-California, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico-maintain normal unemployment rates, indicating that jobs are not being lost to these workers. Despite the constant rumors that illegal immigrants are a burden on America's entitlement programs, many illegals in fact pay billions of dollars into Medicare and Social Security programs through payroll taxes, benefits that they can never claim.

The real threat here isn't the problem of illegal immigration but rather the threat these unauthorized border crossings represent. Our weakened borders provide an opportunity for terrorists to cross into our country. The other threat is that of increased crime from immigrants involved with Mexico's drug cartels. What is needed is a comprehensive approach, one that unites a pragmatic, tolerant-even sympathetic-approach towards illegal immigrants looking for a job with an effective stance against threats to our country's security. Even better, creating the former will make it easier to establish the latter. Once immigrants are able to register with our government, Homeland Security will be able to focus on the true dangers along the border.

Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) have proposed legislation that creates a graduated program towards citizenship that begins with a fine while providing a reasonable increase in funding towards border security. This pragmatic approach is unloved on both the far right and left, but the fact that it could work should outweigh extremist positions. At the end of the day, xenophobia and racism seem to be the main causes of groundless anti-immigrant rhetoric. It is a rare time when a contentious issue can be answered with reasoned public policy: We should celebrate it.

GRAND RAPIDS PRESS (MI): Immigration law, immigration reality 06/01

Wednesday, June 01, 2005

The United States must find a way to make immigration rules meet reality.

The status quo -- widespread violation of laws that are nearly impossible to enforce -- is unacceptable.

A new proposal in the United States Senate, while not a panacea for this complex problem, moves in the right direction. The bill balances national security, economic need and humane treatment of those coming to America in search of a better life.

Whole sectors of the U.S. economy are built around the estimated 10 million illegal immigrants living and working here. They wash dishes, change hotel beds, watch children and pick crops -- jobs many Americans don't or won't take.

Kicking them out of the United States is a logistical impossibility. Were it possible, it would be an economic nightmare.

Allowing them to stay under current laws, however, neglects a central reality: They are here illegally. That's no trivial concern. Accounting for people flying under the legal radar has to be a high priority in post-9/11 America.

The reform bill put forward by Sens. John McCain, R-Arizona, and Edward Kennedy, D-Massachusetts, tries to bring some order to this irrational system.

It would allow about 400,000 temporary workers into the country a year, creating two new visa categories. The first covers people from other countries who don't currently work in the United States but want to; the second covers people already working here illegally who want to stay.

Foreigners could use an Internet database to apply through U.S. consulates for jobs not filled by U.S. citizens. They would undergo background and medical checks, be issued a secure visa and pay a $500 processing fee. The visa would be good for three years and renewable for another three. Workers under this category could seek permanent residency within four years.

Workers here illegally would be required to pay a $2,000 fine. They would go to the back of the line for legal residency, having to wait six years before applying.

They would have to prove they have learned English and civics, and undergo tough criminal background checks.

That does not amount to an "amnesty," as critics have claimed. The two-tier system proposed in this bill punishes those who have skirted the law and rewards those who follow it.

Key to making any change work is tough enforcement. The federal government has to get serious about rooting out illegal immigrants and cracking down on businesses that hire them. In-country illegals won't come forward to face stiff penalties unless the alternative -- being found and deported -- is a real possibility.

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The legislation would authorize the Department of Labor to conduct random audits on employers and levy heavier fines. In addition, the bill includes a high-tech system that would allow employers to easily check immigration status.

The broad outlines of the plan are similar to one put forward by President Bush last year.

The president's proposal differed in one key respect. Mr. Bush would have forced temporary workers to return to their home countries when their visas expired.

Savaged by critics on the left and the right, Mr. Bush's plan went nowhere. This latest bill will no doubt face the same cross-fire.

Lawmakers can't be so quickly dismissive without ignoring the obvious. The system is broken.

This bill is an attempt, at least, to fix it.

GREELEY TRIBUNE (CO): Bipartisan plan offers fairness: Worker program would force aliens to obey the law 06/02

Tribune Opinion
June 2, 2005

A bipartisan bill introduced May 12 offers millions of illegal immigrants who hold jobs in this country the opportunity to realize the American Dream -- citizenship.

But it's not a free lunch. Acquiring citizenship would require some effort from immigrants and law officials because included in the bill are extensive police background and medical checks, a substantial monetary fee and regular employment.

Illegal workers in the United States would pay $1,000 each to apply for H-5B visas that would require them to work for six years before seeking permanent residency. Foreign nationals would pay $500 each and would have to prove that an employer had a job waiting for them.

After working for three years, foreign national visa-holders could ask for three-year extensions and, in the meantime, apply for green cards. If the illegal immigrants continued working, paid an additional $1,000, studied English and broke no laws for six years, they could qualify for permanent residency. Ultimately, that could lead to full citizenship.

State Rep. Jim Riesberg, D-Greeley supports the bill proposed by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.

Riesberg refutes the argument that the bill offers amnesty. "It's not amnesty because by paying that, they are recognizing their wrongdoing," Riesberg said.

He also argues that the bill offers hope where previously none existed. We agree. Those who break the law would not qualify for the program, and we don't believe they should.

But the bill is not without opposition.

Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., Weld County Sheriff John Cooke, Weld District Attorney Ken Buck and Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., are among those opposed to the plan.

Allard said illegal immigrants are criminals and bring prostitution and drug trafficking with them. About illegal immigrants, he said, "They're all the same bad characters."

He argues that illegal immigrants make the country unsafe, and the bill encourages them to come and to stay.

We also believe that this country faces some major hurdles with regard to immigration. But for those workers who have lived and worked in this country, obeyed its laws, paid taxes and studied the language, we believe the bill offers a glimmer of hope.

The path to citizenship, even if the bill passes, is long and difficult. Without it, workers have no recourse if they're not paid or if they're mistreated. Without it, they can't work legitimate jobs that offer health insurance. Without it, they're relegated to living in the shadows.

The bill offers an incentive to obey the law, undergo background checks and learn English.

We think that's a positive step toward building a stronger citizenry.

There's no simple solution. Even tightening the borders doesn't address the issue of the millions who already live and work here.

And rounding up everyone who might not have come here legally to deport them could result in profiling unlike anything this country's seen in its history.

Thus, we support the bill which would help pave the road toward U.S. citizenship for those who contribute to society.

SPONSORS

On May 12, Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., and Reps. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., and Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill., joined by Sens. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., introduced The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005.

Source: Sen. John McCain's Web site, mccain.senate.gov/

HOLA HOY (LA, Chicago, NYC): Migración legal 05/27
May 27 2005

A partir de hoy y hasta el 29 de mayo se llevará a cabo una reunión en Las Vegas, Nevada. "Unidos en la lucha" es el lema para detener la inmigración indocumentada. Es la cumbre de los antiinmigrantes. El diario Hoy tampoco quiere más inmigración ilegal. Pero nuestro enfoque es muy distinto. Nosotros hemos solicitado crear mecanismos que reformen las leyes para permitir la regularización de millones de indocumentados y creación de mecanismos que regulen la futura migración.

La organización "Americanos por una Inmigración Legal" que convoca la cumbre tiene en el fondo de sus argumentos maniqueístas un poco de razón: no más inmigración indocumentada. Pero sus criterios son puramente policiacos que encubren el rechazo a la transformación de los estándares que consideran "tradicionales y aceptables" en Estados Unidos -en términos raciales y culturales- por la penetración latina.

Estos son nuestros argumentos: no más inmigración indocumentada. ¿Por qué? Porque deben de existir mecanismos que permitan regularizar el estatus migratorio a los inmigrantes que aquí radican que comprueben antecedentes de bien y trabajo. Estos son los inmigrantes que mantienen las tasas productivas de la nación y que son la mano de obra de industrias completas. Esa es nuestra gente de la que siempre estaremos a su lado.

Por el otro lado, es necesario crear mecanismos que permitan un ingreso ordenado, seguro y controlado de los necesarios inmigrantes que alimentarán la fuerza laboral en los próximos años. La iniciativa bipartidista presentada por los senadores John McCain y Edward Kennedy contempla ambos puntos que hemos impulsado. Por ello la apoyamos.

Los latinos sabemos muy bien que la inmigración indocumentada provoca resultados negativos. Este año van 63 muertos en la frontera. Por eso es necesario crear un marco legal e institucional para resolver el problema en beneficio de las vidas inmigrantes que aquí buscan un mejor futuro y de nuestra nación que los necesita para mantener su fortaleza.

En la cumbre de Las Vegas veremos a personas obsesionadas en imponer su punto de vista. Es tiempo de resolver el problema con los mecanismos correctos y no con la cerrazón y la fuerza que los antiinmigrantes sugieren.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE (TX): Immigration reform needs to address not only ideals, but also reality 05/29

A new bill in Congress creates a launching ground.

POINT OF EMBARCATION

May 29, 2005, 12:48AM
Houston Chronicle

LIKE other contradictions in American life, the role of undocumented immigrants in this country prompts ferocious policy disagreement. On one hand, illegal immigrants are motivated workers whose labor keeps many U.S. industries alive. On the other, illegal immigrants depress wages, enable corrupt employers and sap public services meant for law-abiding U.S. citizens. The policy questions get tougher still when it comes to illegal immigrants who have lived here for years, raised American children, and invested deeply in American businesses and homes. How should they be treated under the law — and is there a realistic way of halting the flood of newcomers hoping to join their ranks?

A new bill sponsored by Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, and Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass, confronts these challenges. Attuned to both conservative and liberal concerns, the bill calls for better enforcement at the borders and fines for noncompliant employers. It also allows immigrants here illegally to pay a $2,000 penalty and apply for work visas lasting up to six years. After that period, if the immigrant passes an English language requirement and rigorous legal vetting, he can apply for a green card.

If the McCain-Kennedy bill has one guiding idea, it is that American security is threatened not only by terrorists abroad, but also by the shadow economy and clandestine population at home. Accordingly, once inside our borders, undocumented immigrants should be drawn into the light of legalization.

The bill's guest worker plan sounds a lot like amnesty — a strategy that has failed in the past — but its moderation at least recognizes the situation in which the United States finds itself. By contrast, another proposal, drafted by Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, would send immigrants home after three years. This scenario is too optimistic. The harder it is to return to the United States, the more undocumented immigrants will simply stay put and try to send for their families.

The McCain-Kennedy bill shows special promise because it is bipartisan and backed by interest groups and advocates for business, labor and immigrants. Even better, it was designed to conform with President George W. Bush's stated goals on immigration policy. Bush should give the bill his imprimatur to help it through a difficult passage.

Comprehensive as it is, the bill needs to be reinforced with other policies that get at the roots of illegal immigration. Its enforcement aspect in particular lacks bite, leaning too heavily on technology, commissions and studies.

Also, any immigration bill must be coupled with an aggressive U.S. policy pressing Mexico to make jobs for its own people. Without political and economic change south of the border, even the most sensible bill — and McCain-Kennedy is one of the best so far — will not alleviate America's immigration crisis.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE (TX): Plan by Minutemen to videotape illegal immigrants seeking work in Houston misses the point 07/10
THE WRONG TARGET

July 10, 2005, 9:22PM

Houston Chronicle

If the Minutemen, the group that wants to halt illegal immigration at the border, intends to videotape undocumented workers as they negotiate on the streets of Houston with prospective employers, they had better come armed with crates of cassettes. As anyone who drives North Shepherd or dozens of other streetside job fairs knows, the practice of hiring illegal immigrants as day laborers is widespread, conducted in broad daylight and tolerated by local law enforcement agencies and federal immigration agents.

Exactly what the amateur filmmakers hope to accomplish, beyond getting news coverage, is difficult to fathom. In their well-publicized actions along the U.S.-Mexican border, the Minutemen had the support of local landowners angry over disruptive groups of immigrants invading their property. Their reception here likely will be very different. The cheap labor provided by undocumented workers in Houston and other cities is a fact of life, one embraced by most business interests and an issue few politicians care to tackle.

With an estimated population of 400,000 noncitizens illegally residing in Houston and 11 million nationwide, a coordinated effort by authorities to deny them the ability to earn money to feed themselves and their families would provoke a social and health care crisis not seen since the Depression. Uncontrolled immigration cannot be solved on the local or state level.

The place where the Minutemen should focus their efforts is Washington, D.C., where Congress has yet to approve immigration reform legislation. A bill co-sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., includes a guest worker program similar to one proposed by President Bush last year. It would allow noncitizens who wish to work in America to apply for U.S. visas after undergoing security checks and medical exams. A database would then match the applicants with prospective employers.

For illegals already here, permanent residency could be earned by demonstrating gainful employment, undergoing security screening, paying a fee and meeting language and civics requirements. "This bill does not provide a free pass to anyone," Kennedy argues.

These are farsighted measures of a kind that are needed to solve the dilemma of illegal immigration in America. The Minutemen and the country would be better served if they focused their videocams on lawmakers rather than hapless job seekers and demanded swift action on meaningful immigration reform.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE (TX): Does the United States need illegal immigrants? How can destitute Americans be put to work? 09/05

LABOR AND LAMENTATION

Houston Chronicle
Sept. 5, 2005, 12:49AM

ILLEGAL immigration is again a hot-button American issue. Fear of terrorism, economic insecurity, concerns about "cultural dilution" and resentment over public extra spending for social services drive this growing anxiety and xenophobia. Whatever arguments might be made on these fronts, the case that illegal immigrants are stealing jobs from American workers is increasingly difficult to make.

In California, reports the Los Angeles Times, growers don't have enough workers to bring in summer harvests. They blame stricter enforcement by federal border agents and competition from construction, another industry heavily dependent on immigrant labor.

When the fruit is ripening on the vine, the farmers don't care if the labor comes from undocumented Mexican immigrants or unemployed Silicon Valley programers. The problem is that unemployed Americans generally don't seek out back-breaking agricultural work.

Union leaders and immigration foes blame low wages. They argue that if the supply of cross-border migrant workers were cut off, wages would rise and Americans would take those jobs. The California farmers say labor costs are 80 percent of their expenses and they can't afford to pay more. Neither can many Americans afford to pay more for food at the grocery store. American workers would have to replace 53 percent of the nation's agricultural work force if illegal immigrants were no longer available, according to statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Similar labor shortages are apparent elsewhere in the country. Houston's growing economy employs hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants, with new arrivals every day. Now thousands of unemployed evacuees from Louisiana need to find work. Some will return to New Orleans eventually and need only temporary or part-time work. Others will remain here and need permanent employment.

Drive-up labor exchanges such as those long used by immigrant day laborers can provide work for some evacuees, but the city should do more. Along with other social services set up at the Astrodome, a nonprofit employment agency should try to match job offers with evacuees.

The United States also feels shortfalls of trained professionals, particularly in science and engineering. In a Labor Day appeal, John Engler, president of the National Association of Manufacturers, decried the growing shortage of workers with training in science, engineering, math and high-level technical training. Illegal immigrants are not going to plug this labor gap. Lamentably, Americans, who are dropping out of high school at rates approaching 40 percent, aren't either. If U.S. manufacturers can't find the skilled labor they need at home, they will look for help overseas.

Border-watch groups such as the Minuteman Project and organizations such as the Washington-based Federation for American Immigration Reform are calling for the federal government to crack down on the estimated 7 million to 11 million people living and working illegally in the United States. Texas, along with California, New York, Florida and Illinois, has the highest concentrations. If even half were forced out of the labor pool, the economic impact would be widely felt.

Business says it needs foreign labor. Immigration reformers say the country needs to be able to control its borders. It is incumbent on Washington to take care of both needs by providing needed laborers a practical, legal channel into the work force.

IDAHO MOUNTAIN EXPRESS (Sun Valley Area, ID): Give immigration reform a chance 06/03

June 3, 2005

As the late film comic Jimmy (The Schnoz) Durante would say in a moment of exasperation while slapping his thighs, "Everybody wants to get into the act."

Indeed, voices everywhere are popping up with "solutions" to the hot new national controversy, immigration—specifically the steady human stream of illegal aliens across the U.S.-Mexico border in search of work. The issue of terrorists slipping across is a different challenge.

President Bush has a solution, as do members of Congress, radio and TV commentators, business groups whose members rely on immigrant labor, Hispanic coalitions, and, of course, volunteer Minutemen patrolling the border.

Some ideas are far-fetched, such as mobilizing the National Guard to form a human wall along the border to prevent entry. The Army, stretched thin in Iraq, will be surprised to know of spare Guardsmen for border patrol duty.

The most plausible, the most easily implemented plan seems to be common to proposals by the president, U.S. Sen. Larry Craig of Idaho and Sen. John McCain of Arizona: a form of amnesty to allow illegals to remain as accredited workers and eventually apply for permanent residency as well as allow would-be immigrants a chance to register for jobs.

Any notion that 10 million to 12 million illegal aliens could be rounded up and deported is nonsense. The major blind spot of xenophobes with a generalized resentment of "illegales" is they're convinced they've gobbled up jobs that American citizens would work. As Sen. Craig points out, upwards of 78 percent of all agricultural work these days is done by immigrant labor—a force that could hardly be replaced with American citizens.

In Idaho's Canyon County, 20 percent of the population of 151,000 is Hispanic, many presumably illegal. In Blaine County, it's about 10 percent Hispanic, although no figures are available on illegal vs. legal immigrants.

None of the proposed legislation can possibly stop illegal entries. The reality is that Mexicans find better-paying jobs in the United States, and until Mexico provides economic incentives for residents to remain there, some illegal immigration will continue.

Meanwhile, some control over immigration can be achieved through laws that would penalize U.S. employers who haven't become part of a hiring plan that authorizes immigrants to work here temporarily.

Proposals also would effectively remove any power of employers to blackmail workers into accepting peonage wages and remaining at their jobs out of fear they'd be reported to U.S. authorities.

With a measure of regulation in place to track immigrants at work here, federal and local agencies will be in a far better position to also begin tackling the nagging problem of immigrants overloading health-care facilities.

IDAHO MOUNTAIN EXPRESS (Sun Valley Area, ID): Immigration is a mess 08/05

Friday, August 5, 2005

Americans and their political leaders are schizophrenic about immigration, and what passes today for policy is a mess.

Comes now more confusion: Western Idaho's Canyon County has filed a federal lawsuit alleging that large employers are violating the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) because, allegedly, they're hiring illegal aliens.

From this distance, the action looks like a stretch. Defendants also deny anything illegal. And there's the distinct appearance of politics involved: The lawsuit was spearheaded by Canyon County Commissioner Robert Vasquez, who is a candidate for Congress in District 1.

That aside, states and local governments are left to deal with immigration issues that are properly the responsibility of the White House and Congress—neither of which have done much to take charge.

With Mexico now the preeminent exporter of illegal drugs into the United States, with the Mexican border still porous enough for more illegal crossings, and with an estimated 10 million illegals now here, delaying a firm, enforceable policy only worsens conditions for states where border-crossers head.

Deporting all illegals through eventual visa incentives (as U.S. Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Arizona, proposes) is unrealistic and unworkable, although politically appealing.

More workable is Sen. John McCain's legislation that provides an "amnesty" for illegals already here in exchange for registering. This would get a handle on the problem while not disrupting hundreds of employers who depend on unskilled labor.

In the end, however, sealing the Mexico-U.S. border is the only true solution. That will take more effort than the White House and Congress have shown thus far.

JACKSON CITIZEN PATRIOT (MI): Immigration reform top issue for nation 08/25

Thursday, August 25, 2005

At last, an issue that should be front-and-center on the national agenda -- immigration reform -- is gaining momentum. At least two significant reform packages are before Congress, and two governors have declared states of emergency along the U.S.-Mexico border. We don't welcome emergencies, yet we do appreciate the heightened sense of priority on this issue.

Immigration has been a hot potato for both parties. Many conservative Republicans think the president and his proposed guest-worker program are too weak a response to the problem. Until this month, it appeared that national Democrats were reluctant to take on the issue because it has implications for pet constituencies. But that has changed.

In fact, this summer has been a wake-up call for those in both parties who prefer inaction to confronting the immigration problem.

First, consider the impact of the declarations by two governors -- New Mexico's Bill Richardson and Arizona's Janet Napolitano. Both governors are Democrats, and Richardson has presidential aspirations. In both cases, emergencies were declared in four border counties. And these aren't routine protests against an unchecked flow of illegal immigrants.

Richardson cited "kidnapping, murder, destruction of property and the death of livestock" as part of the rationale for his declaration. He says he was driven to act to protect his own people. Napolitano cited "violent gangs ... and other dangerous criminals" in her declaration. Both governors' declarations free up money for border patrols, night-vision goggles, and overtime needed to put a halt to illegal immigration, drug smuggling and other crimes.

Meanwhile, neither Gov. Rick Perry of Texas nor Arnold Swarzenegger of California have followed suit. Both are Republicans.

These developments suggest that immigration reform is cutting across party lines. Good news, for it means we'll see bipartisan cooperation in Congress and the White House on this issue. Regarding the two bills in Congress: One is the bipartisan Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, with two prominent backers -- Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass. The other is sponsored by Sens. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., and John Cornyn, R-Texas. There's growing support for the McCain-Kennedy bill, which would give illegals already here a multistep, 11-year path to citizenship and allow in 400,000 guest workers annually.

We'll deal more specifically with details of the legislation as Congress focuses on specifics in debate. For now, it is enough to emphasize why immigration reform is important, not just along southern border states, but up here along our U.S.-Canadian borders as well.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security says that 4,226 "special-interest aliens" were apprehended along the Canadian and Mexican borders from Oct. 1, 2002, to June 30, 2003. By June 30, 2004, that number had grown by 42.5 percent to 6,022 aliens from "countries of interest" -- Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea and others.

Set aside the cultural and economic impacts of illegal immigration; this is a national-security issue. In a post-9/11 world, how can responsible elected officials sit by and do nothing while thousands of these "special-

interest aliens" seek to penetrate our borders? How can they criticize the volunteer patrols dubbed "Minutemen" while, as leaders, they sit on their hands?

At least Govs. Richardson and Napolitano, Sens. Kennedy, McCain, Kyl and Cornyn are doing something. And the president says he wants an immigration bill to sign by this fall. We agree. It's high time the nation got serious about this growing security problem.

--The Jackson Citizen Patriot

L.A. DAILY NEWS (CA): Emergency management 08/18

Governor should avoid empty gestures when it comes to immigration problem

Article Last Updated: 8/18/2005 06:31 PM

Give Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger credit for not rushing to follow his counterparts in Arizona and New Mexico by declaring a state of emergency over illegal immigration. No doubt the anti-immigration zealots would be encouraging such a move.

Schwarzenegger surely knows, as all Californians do, that illegal immigration has an enormous impact on the state. There are an estimated 2.4 million undocumented workers working on the state's many farms, in restaurants, on street corners and in homes. This shadowy and unknown subculture - the largest of any state in the union - causes uncountable impacts on the state in terms of education and health care.

In a very real sense, it is an emergency, and one that has been going on for years.

But that doesn't mean Schwarzenegger should bend to pressure and join in a mostly meaningless public relations move.

Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson arguably do have an urgent situation, with their states ground zero for the flow of U.S.-bound immigrants as well as for the border vigilantes' movement. Making a state-of-emergency declaration frees up $1.5 million for each state to use to patrol the hot zones.

Schwarzenegger said he will keep an eye on the situation and follow if "there's a need."

But he should only move if there's a clearly effective solution. The last thing California needs is another empty gesture when it comes to illegal immigration. Without real support of Congress and the president, not even crying "emergency" is bound to have meaningful results.

Not when the Republicans controlling the federal government refuse to work toward a sane immigration policy, despite a proposal by the White House for a guest worker program. Not when federal law enforcement authorities have virtually given up on busting employers who hire illegal immigrants. Not when millions in homeland security funds are being allocated to secure the empty plains of Wyoming.

Rather than yelling "emergency," Schwarzenegger and the other governors of southwestern states ought to use their positions to escalate pressure on their state's congressional representatives and senators put on the White House to put immigration policy on the front burner.

Until the federal government turns its full attention on the state of illegal immigration, there's very little individual states can do to stop it.

L.A. DAILY NEWS (CA): Borderline policy 08/25

More patrols are needed but so is a policy for immigrants already here
LA Daily News
Article Last Updated: 8/25/2005 05:22 PM

The governors of New Mexico and Arizona declared a state of emergency last week over the illegal-immigration problem and demanded that the federal government help them cope with the rising tide of people flooding across the board with Mexico and the resulting violence, accidents and injuries.

U.S. Homeland Security Chief Michael Chertoff responded to the appeals by promising he would increase border patrols and surveillance of the border and immigrants. He said he was working on a strategy that would also aid in the deportation process so immigrants didn't get set free by accident.

Excuse us for being skeptical, but this sounds like so much political jawboning.

Nor does it even address the more significant concern of what to do about the millions of illegal immigrants well across the border and living here.

Chertoff's correct that we need tougher border control. But it must be coupled with a sane, humane and effective policy that recognizes the reality that millions of undocumented workers are already here living in a legal limbo that doesn't benefit them or the rest of society.

LAS VEGAS SUN (NV): All eyes on our borders 10/20

President Bush is making border security and immigration issues a top priority, as is Congress, which will consider two bills addressing the high-profile issues

LAS VEGAS SUN
October 20, 2005

In signing a nearly $31 billion measure this week to fund the Homeland Security Department, President Bush tried to deflect mounting criticism that he is soft on illegal immigration. "To defend this country we've got to enforce our borders," Bush said. He emphasized how that will be done under the new bill -- there will be more electronic surveillance, border patrol agents, border stations and detention centers for holding captured violators.

Perhaps to mollify his conservative base, Bush also supported deportations "as soon as possible" of anyone caught having entered this country illegally.

We do need to tighten our borders. If harmless people seeking work can run across our borders by the hundreds every day and quickly make their way into our cities and rural areas, so, too, can terrorists and common criminals such as drug runners. But using deportation imagery in such a broad reference was not wise on Bush's part. Most law enforcement agencies want undocumented workers to feel secure in reporting crimes against them, without having to worry about being sent back to their home country.

Bush also renewed his more reasonable call for a guest worker program that would allow undocumented immigrants, after they paid stiff fines, to apply for visas. Once documented, they could work in this country for up to six years before having to return to their home country for at least one year.

This plan would certainly be preferable over the extreme notion that the nation's 11 million illegal immigrants should be rounded up and deported. But it is flawed nevertheless, as it does not give workers (many have started families here) a chance to apply for permanent residency.

There are now two bills before Congress loosely patterned after Bush's general vision. One, introduced by Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., would give illegal immigrants five years to leave the country on their own. It would allow them to return as documented immigrants and work for two years in jobs unable to be filled by Americans. But what happens after the five years? A roundup of possibly millions of workers who didn't leave?

The other bill is sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass. It would allow undocumented workers to remain employed here for up to six years. After that they could stay if they had applied for residency. The bill also would require them to pay up to $2,000 in fees and make good-faith efforts to learn English. We support this bill. Combined with tighter border enforcement, it would provide a solution to the immigration problem short of punishing millions of people who have labored hard here as the only way of providing for themselves and their families.

LEBANON DAILY NEWS (PA): Targeting immigration 06/15

Wednesday, June 15, 2005 - With an estimated 11 million or more illegal immigrants in the United States, it's clear that existing border policies have become a joke. They too often ignore the labor needs of the economy and, well, where do we begin about the lack of enforcement? The laws against illegal immigration and hiring undocumented workers are poorly enforced, when they are enforced at all.

Past efforts to update U.S. immigration laws have taken years. The task is among the most ticklish and difficult facing Congress, with social and economic ramifications along with diplomatic and domestic security impacts.

Some weeks ago, a serious effort to tackle the immigration headache was launched by Sens. John McCain, a border-state Republican, and Ted Kennedy, a Northeast liberal. This odd-duck authorship represents the need to forge a broad consensus. Indeed, McCain-Kennedy is a rational approach that holds much promise if calm heads can prevail over demagoguery.

The McCain-Kennedy bill is in synch with many of President Bush's immigration-reform ideas, which increases the likelihood of success. (Also, the word out of Washington is the president now supports concepts he once opposed, such as not requiring illegal immigrants to return home to gain legal status.)

"It's certainly the most ambitious formulation that we've seen," said Doris Meissner of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, "and it really does take on the broad sweep of the issues."

Meissner, director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service under President Clinton, said McCain-Kennedy will "help focus the discussion. It creates something specific against which to really have a debate" and "probably will go through several iterations" before reaching the Senate floor. She also observed the White House was "amazingly mum about McCain-Kennedy when it was introduced."

In contrast, Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colorado, gave the bill both barrels. He ripped border-security provisions as "little more than commissioning of a few more government reports and working groups" and said "the rest of the bill is dedicated to things like providing taxpayer-funded health care and instant amnesty for millions of illegal aliens who have broken our laws."

True, the bill proposes legitimizing the status of illegal workers currently in the U.S. They would have to pay $2,000 in fines, as well as back taxes, and pass criminal background checks and medical exams. These immigrants could then apply for three-year guest-worker visas, renewable once. After six years, the workers would be eligible to apply for permanent resident status for themselves and their families, and, after five more years, U.S. citizenship.

The bill would allow U.S. employers to hire up to 400,000 foreign workers the first year on a showing that no residents would take the jobs. These workers also eventually could become permanent residents.

Despite its bipartisan support, McCain-Kennedy faces an uphill fight on both sides of the aisle: from Republicans opposed to any form of amnesty and from Democrats who fear cheap foreign labor will depress domestic wages.

McCain-Kennedy is a reasonable springboard to debate the many tough issues that are raised by U.S. immigration policy.

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (NE): Immigration emergency real enough 09/07

Wednesday, September 07, 2005

Immigration reform has been stalemated for so long that it's difficult to muster much hope that things will ever change.

Pragmatists in the middle never seem to find enough traction to get something done.

But maybe, just maybe, an opportune moment has arrived.

The declaration by the Gov. Janet Napolitano and Gov. Bill Richardson that a state of emergency existed on the U.S. border with Mexico because the federal government was not doing enough to control the situation seems to have galvanized the reform effort.

Although some critics sniffed that the whole thing was a publicity stunt — both Richardson and Napolitano are Democrats — the governors had some persuasive facts on their side.

Near the town of Columbus, N.M., more than 30,000 undocumented immigrants have been captured since October, according to Richardson. The flood of people across the border included violent incidents like the kidnapping of three teenaged girls by masked men, killing of cattle and sniper fire at the local police chief, he said.

In Arizona, more than 510,000 undocumented immigrants have been captured since October. Napolitano said that the flood of people across the border included violent gangs and criminals who threaten the safety of Arizona residents.

The flood of people coming across the border continues to grow. In the 1980s the number sneaking across was estimated at about 140,000. Last year, the Pew Hispanic Center estimated, more than 700,000 unauthorized migrants came to the United States. According to a Pew Center poll, one in four workers in Mexico said they would like to work in the United States.

Like many states with meatpacking plants and other jobs that can be filled by unskilled labor, Nebraska has an important stake in immigration reform. Our state has attracted many immigrants in recent years. Communities like Lexington and Schuyler now have a significant number of Hispanic residents.

Part of the solution is to provide adequate protection at the border between Mexico and the United States. Policy changes that recognize existing reality also are necessary.

The most practical proposals for policy reform include proposals for guest worker visas, as suggested by President Bush, and a path for undocumented workers now in the United States to gain legal status, as proposed in a bill introduced last year by Sen. Chuck Hagel and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, who failed to win re-election.

Currently the most viable legislation is a bipartisan bill that includes both those elements sponsored by Sen. John McCain of Arizona and Sen. Edward Kennedy. Hagel plans to reintroduce his own legislation with a Democratic co-sponsor later this year.

Now that governors are declaring that our nation's borders are in a state of emergency, Congress ought to stop posturing long enough to actually support bipartisan proposals such as these that embody real solutions.

LONG BEACH PRESS TELEGRAM (CA): Sensible immigration 05/14

Bipartisan bill would help control illegals.

Saturday, May 14, 2005 - Congress finally has before it a plan to reform immigration policy in a way that actually makes sense. Bipartisan legislation introduced in the Senate last week would fundamentally improve the way the United States handles its migrant worker population.

The legislation, drafted by Republican Sen. John McCain and Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy and supported by a bipartisan group of lawmakers, has drawn widespread praise among diverse groups, from business and conservative organizations to union leaders and immigration advocates.

The only groups actively opposing the bill, called the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005, are those who oppose illegal immigration in any form. No real-world solution would please them.

The McCain and Kennedy proposal does reflect the real world, acknowledging the positive economic benefits of illegal workers while addressing domestic security concerns and other negative effects.

The bill wouldn't provide amnesty for illegal workers. It would establish a structured, temporary guest worker program that would allow migrant workers to obtain three-year visas at U.S. consulate offices, after paying a $500 fee and passing a criminal background check. The visas could be renewed every three years, and workers could apply for permanent residency, not full citizenship, after four years.

Workers now in the United States illegally would have to register with the government, pass the background check and pay a $2,000 fine to obtain the visa. For permanent resident status, they would have to work for six more years and prove they were learning English.

Businesses that continued to hire illegal labor off the guest-worker books would be subject to harsh penalties.

Several benefits would be felt immediately. Domestic security would be improved, as the United States would have a system to check and track what is now a huge pool of working illegal immigrants more than 11 million nationwide by some estimates. Security at the borders would be tighter, and more orderly, with fewer deaths and accidents from unsafe border crossings (more than 2,000 migrants have died since 1998 attempting to cross the border in dangerous areas). The guest worker program would also put an end to the ugly criminal enterprise of human smuggling.

And, importantly, a guest worker program would allow for the collection of taxes to support public services such as schools and hospitals.

Militarizing the border hasn't worked. So long as businesses are freely hiring illegal workers and some industries are staffed entirely by undocumented immigrants they will continue to find ways across. And it's uncertain how much control states themselves can exercise over borders, since immigration is a federal matter [See Daniel Weintraub's column on the SundayForum page].

The status quo is failing miserably. A structured, orderly guest worker program makes economic sense while addressing national security and human-rights concerns.

The McCain/Kennedy plan offers a realistic, meaningful solution to a broken system. Congress and President Bush ought to put it into action.

LONGMONT DAILY TIMES-CALL (CO): Immigration deserves attention 05/29

Publish Date: 5/29/2005

The great battle over immigration reform has been launched, although the platform for the discussion is probably not what Colorado Rep. Tom Tancredo would have wanted.

A coalition of members of Congress led in the Senate by John McCain of Arizona and Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts has proposed a far-reaching immigration-reform bill that will likely form the framework for the discussion in the near future. Proponents expect that it will take until 2007 to get something accomplished.

The McCain/Kennedy approach is not close to what Tancredo would propose, but there is agreement on this: The nation's current immigration policy is not working, and it needs reform. Our borders have not been secured, and traditional methods of receiving permission to enter the country for temporary or permanent relocation have not worked. Millions of illegal immigrants currently live in the United States, resulting in potential security problems and very real economic problems.

Tancredo and others want greater border security, want to round up illegal aliens and send them home, and want to avoid amnesty at all costs.

McCain/Kennedy, who tend to refer to illegal immigrants as "undocumented" people, tackle the issue on multiple fronts. They would:

Deal with existing illegals by giving them the means to identify themselves without being booted out. They would pay large fines in order to be permitted to stay in the country. They also would be fingerprinted and submit to background checks.

Create a temporary visa program for guest workers who would fill unskilled positions for a limited amount of time. They could work toward permanent residency under the laws that apply to all immigrants. This category of visa would be capped at 400,000 per year.

Beef up enforcement of border-crossing laws and increase fines to companies that knowingly hire illegals.

Encourage Mexico to help prevent illegal immigration.

Promote opportunity in Mexico and other places so there would be less movement of people for economic reasons.

Require employers to try to hire citizens first, but when they can't find citizens willing to work for the wage offered, they could hire foreign nationals.

Create a tamper-proof visa document with biometric information.

Some business groups have gotten behind the measure, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. It is thought that President Bush, who has suggested a guest worker program, might favor the bill, although he has not weighed in on the details.

While there is no agreement on this issue, despite the bipartisan nature of the McCain/Kennedy bill, at least it is now receiving the attention it deserves. Tancredo has tried since his first day in office to have immigration discussed, and now that will likely happen.

The measure that finally will pass will likely undergo numerous changes from the introduced bill version, but the multi-faceted approach of this measure gives it a greater chance than the hard line drawn by some in the past.

LONGMONT DAILY TIMES-CALL (CO): Immigration system must be fixed 09/30

Publish Date: 9/30/2005

The federal government talks a good game concerning immigration.

Officials will talk about tighter homeland security and putting military personnel on the borders. Even vigilante groups have been patrolling areas along the U.S.-Mexico border to ensure that people don't illegally enter the country.

But according to a study by the Pew Hispanic Center released Tuesday, none of that matters. Not only is the number of illegal immigrants increasing, but it has surpassed the number of legal immigrants.

An Associated Press story about the report indicates that, since 2001, the number of legal permanent residents entering the United States has declined from 578,000 to 455,000, while the number of illegal immigrants has increased from 549,000 to 562,000.

This speaks not only to the porous nature of the U.S. border, but also to the amount of red tape people seeking to immigrate legally face.

Since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the process for people seeking to enter the United States has become much more difficult. More thorough checks result in longer waits for those whose applications end up at the bottom of a pile on somebody's desk.

This situation results in an even greater strain on homeland security. Undoubtedly, along with the thousands entering with legitimate intentions to find work and support families back home are criminals bringing drugs across the border. Potential terrorists could be in the mix as well.

The federal government needs to find a way to streamline the immigration process as soon as possible to allow border patrol authorities to focus on preventing the entry of criminals rather than stopping seasonal workers from entering the country.

LOS ANGELES TIMES (CA): Borderline leadership 07/24

July 24, 2005

PRESIDENT BUSH HAS been talking for five years, somewhat halfheartedly, about the need to overhaul the nation's immigration laws. The clock is running out. The president needs to make the issue a priority now or the opportunity will have been lost and the former border governor will have failed to resolve the nation's unhealthy immigration policy. The current system combines a failure to control the borders with an insistence on treating needed immigrant workers as criminals.

The good news is that some people in Washington do see this as an urgent matter — the president's own Homeland Security secretary, Michael Chertoff, asserted earlier this month that Bush's guest-worker proposal was not merely about economics but national security. He realizes that an illegal underground population of 10 million people is intolerable on both grounds.

The case of four Phoenix-area honors students detained by immigration agents at Niagara Falls offered a different perspective on the same dysfunctional status quo. These students traveled to Buffalo in 2002 to compete in a high school science competition. Because of their Latino appearance, immigration agents approached them and demanded to know their status. It was determined that the students had come to the United States illegally — when they were between 2 and 7 years old. Last Thursday, a judge took the sensible step of blocking their deportation.

The students' stories are compelling, yet so are those of hundreds of migrants who die each year crossing the desert in search of work. Hardly anyone in Washington would disagree that the nation needs far more foreign workers than current quotas allow. Two competing Senate bills introduced recently — one by John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.); the other by John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) — would expand temporary-worker programs and are scheduled to be considered Tuesday at a Judiciary Committee hearing.

As senators consider these proposals, their priority should be to tailor the law to economic reality and to ensure that the law be realistic and enforceable. This means focusing on the numbers of foreign workers needed, addressing the current population of undocumented workers and making it harder to be hired illegally after legal opportunities have been expanded. Simply militarizing the border is not a solution — as a study from the conservative Cato Institute makes clear. It argued that tougher border policing in recent years had encouraged illegal immigrants to stay in this country longer than they otherwise would have. But the political imperative of avoiding even the appearance of a blanket amnesty can also lead to some unworkable ideas. The Cornyn-Kyl bill, for instance, would require the more than 10 million undocumented workers in this country to turn themselves in for deportation to their countries of origin before being allowed to apply for a new guest-worker program. That proposal might have sounded just dandy in some conference room on Capitol Hill, but it isn't going to happen.

We welcome these hearings, but we are under no illusions that the attention will be sustained: The committee will soon shift gears to focus on the confirmation process for Bush's Supreme Court nominee, and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) has said he doesn't consider immigration reform to be on the front burner. Hence the need for some White House leadership on the issue.

LOS ANGELES TIMES (CA): Immigration reform, again 09/22

September 22, 2005

IF THE WHITE HOUSE IS finally serious about a comprehensive plan to fix the nation's immigration system, and there are signs that it is, then President Bush needs to get serious about working with Democrats — and standing up to the more unreasonable members of his own party. Immigration reform is still possible this fall, but not without the president's bipartisan leadership.

This isn't the first time Bush has said he is ready to tackle the issue. He spoke about the need for reform in February 2001 and again in January 2004, each time raising expectations that he was prepared to remake the nation's immigration policies into a system that would be "safe, orderly and legal."

So it's reasonable to ask why this time is different. The answer is pleasantly surprising: Members of the House who were invited to the White House last week to hear the administration's proposal found it comprehensive. According to those present at the meeting, which included Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), the plan is similar to a bipartisan bill introduced in Congress that has the strong support of both business and immigrant advocacy groups.

The president's proposal calls for better enforcement both on the border and in the workplace. It would also create a guest worker program that would be filled initially with those already working in the country.

The two main immigration bills currently in Congress, one sponsored by Sens. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) and another introduced by Sens. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) contain similar provisions.

Both bills call for better border law enforcement, stiffer sanctions on employers who hire illegal workers and a new electronic authorization system for verification of employment eligibility. They impose penalties on employers who fail to comply with the system. And both bills also call for giving applicants a temporary visa to work in the country, but they differ on a key provision. The Kennedy-McCain bill provides a path to permanent residency to workers who keep their job for six years and pay an application fee and a fine. The Cornyn-Kyl bill allows illegal immigrants to work for five years but then requires them to return to their own countries.

Bush should model his proposals along the lines of the enforcement provisions contained in the Cornyn-Kyl bill, and the legalization aspects in the Kennedy-McCain bill.

The president could also show his commitment to serious debate on this issue by dismissing some of the more ridiculous proposals from fellow Republicans such as Reps. Thomas G. Tancredo of Colorado and Tom DeLay and Lamar S. Smith of Texas, who favor strict enforcement first and a guest worker program second. Such partisans would prefer to seal the border and ignore or deport the 10-million-plus people already working here illegally.

Bush knows better than that. Ignoring those working here illegally won't fix the problem, and the notion that immigration agents can round up and deport 10 million people and their families isn't very realistic either.

If the president wants a safe, orderly and legal immigration system, he must be prepared to fight for reform that is both comprehensive and realistic. If he is truly ready to lead, he'll find the bipartisan support he needs in Congress.

LOS ANGELES TIMES (CA): Broken border, broken record 10/22

October 22, 2005

ON THE TOPIC OF IMMIGRATION, President Bush is finding it increasingly difficult to bridge the gap between two wings of his party: the business lobby and the social conservatives who want to close the border and clamp down on illegal immigration. But Bush persists in wanting to simultaneously placate those who want to legalize the flow of labor across the Rio Grande and those who want to end it.

So the same week saw the administration promising tougher border enforcement and pitching its guest worker program. On Tuesday, Bush signed a $30.8-billion domestic security bill that includes money to hire new Border Patrol agents, improve border technology and intelligence capabilities and build more Border Patrol stations and better fencing. To please the business community and to appeal to moderate Republican legislators, the president reiterated his support for a guest worker program that would allow illegal immigrants, some already working here, to obtain a working permit for as long as six years before returning home.

The two approaches are not incompatible. What makes no sense, however, is the insistence by conservative House Republicans, expressed in a recent letter to Bush, that no action be taken on a guest worker program until border crossings and current laws are more effectively enforced. The logic here is flawed; current immigration laws are too divorced from economic reality to be enforceable. Washington now sets an unrealistically low cap on legal visas, forcing U.S. businesses to rely on a black market for labor.

It would be far better for the United States to legally seek the workers it needs to import in a given year and to free resources to police the border against real threats, such as terrorism.

That was the message delivered by Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff at a Senate Judiciary Committee the same day the president addressed immigration. They fleshed out some of the mechanics of a possible guest worker program. Foreign workers, here or abroad, could apply for a one-time, renewable three-year visa if matched with an employer. Illegal immigrants already working in the United States would be fined before entering the program. And a biometric identification card would allow Homeland Security to track his or her whereabouts.

Since 2001, immigration reform has been repeatedly bumped off the president's list of priorities, ostensibly because there is always something more urgent. But it is starting to seem like the delay may also have to do with the political difficulty involved. Bush doesn't want to antagonize either wing of his party, so he keeps flirting with both on immigration.

That's unfortunate. There are enough Democrats, moderate Republicans and even conservative border state Republicans in Congress who understand what needs to be done — and the high cost of not doing it. Bush should lead them in bringing our nation's immigration laws closer in line with reality.

LOWELL SUN (MA): Immigration reform must bring security 10/20

The Lowell Sun
10/20/2005 11:46:59 AM

There are 11 million illegal immigrants living and working in the United States today, and approximately 200,000 of them make their home in Massachusetts.

It would take 200,000 school buses to transport all the illegal immigrants to the Texas-Mexico border. The convoy, end to end, would stretch 1,700 miles.

A nationwide roundup of all illegals is impractical, if not impossible.

Most illegals have jobs, ranging from menial labor to manual labor. These are low-paying jobs that Americans are unwilling to take yet are vital to the service and agricultural industries.

The federal government can no longer drag its feet. Safety and security should be the goal of immigration reform. That's why identifying the millions of illegal immigrants among us is crucial.

A bipartisan effort by U.S. Sens. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., and John McCain, R-Ariz., holds out the promise of fixing a broken system while bringing honor to the American people for trying to help those seeking a better quality of life.

The Kennedy-McCain plan would grant six-year work visas to illegal immigrants who have jobs. The best feature is that all would be given picture IDs and U.S. protection rights. U.S. security would be greatly enhanced.

Each immigrant would have to pay a $2,000 fine and any unpaid taxes, launching a path toward U.S. citizenship.

We don't like the idea of embracing lawbreakers, but the Kennedy-McCain proposal appears to be an acceptable compromise from both an economic and security standpoint. It brings people out of the shadows and provides them the chance to become productive residents. Criminal activity would lead to immediate deportation. That's fair.

Quite frankly, America can't continue to delay immigration reform. Too much is riding on our ability to control our borders.

Still, the Kennedy-McCain bill isn't flawless. It doesn't address what happens to those illegal immigrants who don't sign up for work visas, including the businesses that cultivate illegal workers. Also, what happens to the thousands of foreigners who have waited patiently for years to obtain U.S. immigration visas? Are they just swept aside, because they didn't gain unlawful entry to the U.S.?

Finally, and most important of all, what happens to foreigners who continue to transgress our borders illegally after a new policy is set? If they are allowed to remain in America without punishment, it would undercut real reform and render immigration policy useless.

LUFKIN DAILY NEWS (TX): Deputizing local cops to enforce laws not the answer 10/06

The Lufkin Daily News

Thursday, October 06, 2005

We were disappointed to learn that U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, has proposed legislation that would expand the authority of local law enforcement to arrest illegal immigrants for immigration violations. As if local cops don't have enough to do; now they're being recruited to ferret out those living here illegally.

Demagogues and cranks somehow think that this country would be better off if every illegal immigrant was tossed out of the country. The hard truth is that our economy would come to a screeching halt if that happened. Construction, landscaping, restaurants, poultry workers and other classes of laborers would be in short supply.

President Bush understands that. Last year he proposed a reasonable guest worker program that would allow those here illegally, if they have jobs or the promise of a job, to pay a one-time fee to get a permit to work and live here for three years. The permit is renewable, as long as the worker has a job and doesn't commit a crime.

Sadly, his proposal, also backed by Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, has gone nowhere. Instead, anti-immigrationists have backed vigilante groups such as the Minutemen, who are voluntarily patrolling our borders to turn back people entering illegally. They've introduced legislation to bar citizenship to children born here, even though that's been a American tradition for more than a century.

As columnist Cynthia Tucker pointed out recently, anti-immigrationists rarely attack those who hire illegal immigrants. If they were truly serious about stopping illegal immigration, then they ought to pass laws and start prosecuting folks who hire undocumented workers.

Our failed drug war offers an analogy. If there were no demand, there would be no drug problem. If there were no demand for undocumented workers performing jobs that American citizens are unwilling to do — hotel maids, poultry workers, landscapers, bricklayers — then people wouldn't be streaming across the border to fill those jobs.

If Sen. Hutchison is serious about solving the immigration problem, pushing to pass the president's guest-worker plan is a solid step in that direction. Deputizing local police to enforce immigration laws is hardly the solution.

Note: This editorial also appeared in the Nacogdoches (TX) Daily Sentinel.

MACON TELEGRAPH (GA): Bush tries again on immigration reform 10/23
Sun, Oct. 23, 2005

Back in January 2004, President George W. Bush proposed a plan for dealing with the problems presented by having millions of illegal aliens ("undocumented immigrants" is more politically correct) in this country.

It landed with a dull thud. Congressional Republicans groused it was just an "amnesty" program by another name. It would reward lawbreaking and attract even more illegal immigrants.

Actually, it was a pretty good idea, based on Bush's experience with immigration issues as governor of Texas 1994-2000.

Bush would allow certain undocumented immigrants already in the country to pay a fee (or fine) and receive a temporary worker visa good for three years and renewable for three more, at the end of which the worker would have to go home. (Only those whose employers would certify they held jobs no American could be found to take would qualify.)

Now, 21 months later, the president has picked up the cause again. A couple of days ago he promoted it himself during a bill signing and also sent Labor Secretary Elaine Chao and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to tout the plan before the Senate's Judiciary Committee.

The trio sought to sweeten the proposal by making get-tough promises about closing the border and *really* sending home the hundreds of thousands of non-Mexican immigrants who are caught, released and melt into the crowd.

The guest worker plan itself was presented as an economic necessity for many employers who have to hire immigrant labor for jobs most Americans don't want.

It also, Bush said, recognized that "family values don't stop at the border," that most illegals are here because they want to provide for their families, but have no legal way to do it." A temporary program would provide one.

And it would relieve pressure on the border by "addressing the economic forces that drive immigration," said both Chao and Chertoff. Less chasing of working people would allow more attention to thwarting terrorists.

Competing bills before the Senate share many of Bush's aims. Each happens to be co-sponsored by an Arizona senator:

- Under the bipartisan McCain-Kennedy bill, 400,000 illegals who would pay a fine and learn English while holding three-year guest worker visas and could apply for a green card or permanent status. (There's a long waiting list.).
- Republicans Jon Kyl and John Cornyn (Texas) would require workers to return home to apply for two-year visas.

A lot of pulling and hauling remains before a plan will emerge that all the players can live with. But emerge it must.

Tightening up our borders is essential. But so is getting the 10 million-plus people now illegally in our country out of the legal and political shadows.

MIAMI HERALD (FL): A nation of laws -- and immigrants 05/23

BILL OFFERS A REALISTIC FIX FOR AILING IMMIGRATION SYSTEM Monday, May 23, 2005

Congress finally has a bill that could mend the country's ailing immigration system. Introduced in the House and Senate last week, The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act sets realistic immigration levels and adds tough enforcement. In short, the bipartisan bill offers law and order: an enforceable set of rules that would free up federal resources to concentrate on national-security threats. It should begin a thoughtful debate about sensible reforms.

Such reforms would vastly improve what we have today. When nearly 11 million people are in the United States illegally, there isn't enough money in the Treasury to find and deport them all. After all, no family wants to see its nanny taken away in chains.

What Americans want is a fair and comprehensive overhaul of unenforceable immigration laws. A recent national poll commissioned by the American Immigration Lawyers Association and National Immigration Forum reflects the sentiment. Three out of four likely voters said they would support changes that include: tougher penalties for workers and employers who break the law; temporary status for guest workers; a multiple-year process for obtaining legal status without preferential treatment; and prioritized family reunification.

The Secure America bill (S 1033/HR 2330) offers this and more. To establish an orderly, legal flow of workers from abroad, it would eliminate the underground economy of illegal labor. To do so, the bill sets a realistic ceiling for the future entry of temporary "guest workers" while offering temporary status to undocumented workers already employed here. Other provisions would make it tougher for undocumented workers or employers to violate the law -- and increase penalties for such violations. By radically reducing the number of illegal workers, the bill would free law enforcers to combat terrorist and criminal threats as well as the human smugglers and unscrupulous employers who prey on undocumented immigrants.

That the bill is a strongly bipartisan effort in an era of divisiveness is the icing that improves its prospects. Credit goes to Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., for the heavy lifting. They spent months developing a bill that generally hews to President Bush's guest-worker principles. The bill is garnering diverse support from business, labor, conservative and immigrant-advocate groups. We salute Reps. Lincoln and Mario Díaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen for signing on as original cosponsors of the bill's House version and urge other Florida lawmakers, particularly Sen. Mel Martinez, to follow suit.

No doubt, challenges lie ahead. Anti-immigrant extremists already have begun to complain. They are the crowd that favors Band Aids, such as the just-approved Real ID bill, which may prevent undocumented immigrants from getting driver's licenses but won't improve national security or immigration-law enforcement.

That's why it is crucial for President Bush to weigh in. His guest-worker proposal made for good campaign sound bites last year -- but no legislation followed. And he encouraged Sen. McCain to develop this bill. President Bush should now acknowledge the bill's parallels with his guest-worker principles and encourage a constructive debate on immigration reform. The hope is for a comprehensive solution that works for this nation of laws and immigrants.

MIAMI HERALD (FL): Border enforcement alone isn't a solution 08/07

OUR OPINION: FRACTURED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM NEEDS RATIONAL, COMPREHENSIVE REFORM

Sunday, August 7, 2005

America's fractured immigration system is coming apart at the seams. U.S. employers need workers for jobs that Americans don't want. People from other countries are desperate for such work. As a consequence, the United States has become home to 11 million undocumented immigrants. The vast majority of them entered after 1990, streaming in even after the Border Patrol had tripled the number of agents, built fences and pushed the illegal flow to remote desert stretches on the Mexican border.

More enforcement alone will not solve the problem. The only realistic way for the country to gain control of immigration is to establish reasonable laws and enforce them evenly. Such a system is crafted in the Secure America bill (S 1033/HR 2330), introduced by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. Their proposal offers a realistic ceiling for future temporary "guest workers" and temporary status to undocumented workers already employed here.

Without such comprehensive reforms, immigration threatens to get out of hand. Consider, for example, these recent developments:

• In New Hampshire, police arrested and charged undocumented immigrants with criminal trespass, a state offense -- not an immigration violation -- after federal agents declined to deport the undocumented immigrants.

• Participants at the National Governors Association complained that the Real ID Act, which requires legal status to get driver's licenses, will push enormous federal costs to states by turning motor-vehicle bureaus into immigration-enforcement branches.

• At a recent Senate hearing, the head of the American Health Care Association testified that deporting undocumented health workers would jeopardize the quality of healthcare in the United States.

• In Miami-Dade County, a new state law requiring criminal background checks for vendors, contractors and other occasional school workers -- many of whom are undocumented immigrants -- is predicted to cause delays and possible chaos in construction projects.

Problems such as these reflect America's love-hate relationship with immigrants and are becoming increasingly common. While Americans largely understand the benefits that immigrant workers bring -- cheap food, labor and services -- they also want law and order. Therein is the rub: The current system of immigration law is so out of touch with reality that it is unenforceable and a hindrance to national security.

The upshot of stepped-up enforcement, for example, is that Mexicans who used to go home after working seasonal jobs now stay year round and bring or start families here. More immigrants die attempting to cross the desert, and more also get into the country undetected.

The cost of enforcement, particularly after 9/11, also has shot up. One report, by a pro-immigrant think tank, estimates it would cost at least $206 billion over five years to deport 10 million undocumented immigrants. That's $41.2 billion annually, more than the 2006 Homeland Security budget -- even if such mass deportations were logistically possible.

Sens. McCain's and Kennedy's Secure America bill would crack down on illegal workers and employers who violate the law. By reducing the numbers of immigrants in the shadows, it would free law enforcers to focus on terrorists and other criminal threats.

However, forcing undocumented immigrants to return to their homelands to return as legal guest workers simply won't fly. Who would risk deportation when he is already here and working? Yet that is proposed in an unrealistic bill by Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz.

Both of these bills provide fodder for debating what is best for America and were at the center of the first serious hearing on comprehensive immigration reform in the Senate recently. Yet the Bush administration's key witnesses -- Labor Secretary Elaine Chao and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff -- were no shows. The administration's silence doesn't move the debate or lead to solutions. Unfortunately, President Bush has largely been absent on the issue lately.

Mr. Bush first proposed a guest-worker program 18 months ago, but he has yet to spell out specifics of the proposal. That's not good enough. As the nation awaits the president's leadership on immigration reform, the situation worsens by the day.

MIAMI HERALD (FL): Border enforcement doesn't get job done 10/18
OUR OPINION: CONGRESS SHOULD ENACT PRAGMATIC IMMIGRATION REFORMS
October 18, 2005

A Senate Judiciary Committee hearing today should move the nation closer to a comprehensive fix for its ailing immigration system. White House officials, who have been talking to lawmakers about a guest-worker proposal, are sending two Cabinet members to represent their views on comprehensive reform. Given the competing priorities of Hurricane Katrina legislation and a Supreme Court nomination, it's heartening Congress is pressing ahead on immigration.

Out of the shadows

At the heart of the struggle for immigration reform is a battle between pragmatist and populist lawmakers. The pragmatists offer the most realistic solution: comprehensive fixes that adjust immigration flows to U.S. economic needs, encourage undocumented immigrants to come out of the shadows and enforcement of reasonable immigration laws.

Populists, such as Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colo., and Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., take a different tack. Tough enforcement must come first, they argue, at the border and in workplaces. Anything less than deportation for those who entered illegally is an unacceptable "amnesty," and lawbreakers, including employers who hire illegal workers, must be punished. Yet increased enforcement alone in the last two decades has only resulted in much higher levels of illegal immigration.

Pragmatists, such as U.S. Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., understand that there's no feasible way to deport 11 million undocumented immigrants, many of whom have worked here for years and have U.S.-born children. If, somehow, they could be deported, agricultural and service industries would suffer labor shortages, including in Florida.

Pragmatists also see the need for improved national security in a post-9/11 world. That's why offering undocumented immigrants the chance to earn legalization is critical to bring them out of hiding. Conversely, requiring them to leave the country and then apply for temporary U.S. work permits would only drive them deeper underground.

Earned legalization

Some populist lawmakers may think they are appealing to constituents' law-and-order sentiments with calls for enforcement only. Yet a national poll released Monday suggests that Republican voters are more pragmatic: 72 percent favored an earned-legalization plan that would include increased border security and employer penalties. It would allow illegal immigrants to register, pay a fine and get a temporary work permit. And it offers these workers a multiyear path to citizenship if they live crime-free, learn English, pay taxes and meet other requirements.

Lawmakers should look to enact pragmatic reforms such as those in the bill (S 1033/HR 2330) crafted by Sens. McCain and Kennedy.

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL (WI): Real immigration reform 05/15

From the Journal Sentinel

Last Updated: May 15, 2005

At long last, a start on real immigration reform.

Not the piecemeal approach that has marked previous efforts to deal with this country's dual personality on the issue.

You know: hate those *blankety-blank* illegal immigrants but can I still buy all that cheap produce and get what amounts to discounts (thanks to those *blankety-blanks*) on everything from hotel and restaurant service to home construction?

Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) have crafted realistic legislation that acknowledges the economic need (by including a guest worker program) *and* the human suffering and unfairness inherent in a system that forces immigrants to exist in the shadows.

New guest workers, initially capped at 400,000 yearly, would get a three-year visa, renewable once. They could apply for permanent residency after four years.

Illegal immigrants already here would be allowed to get a temporary visa valid for six years, after which they could apply for permanent residency if they paid $2,000, back taxes and learned English.

In both cases, with new and existing workers, applicants would have to have clean criminal histories and pose no security risks.

Simply, this is win-win. It recognizes that the nation, with an ever-shrinking labor force, requires these workers if the economy is to thrive. But it also recognizes that it is simply un-American to tell immigrants that they are good enough to work for us but not good enough to be one of us.

But, of course, the anti-immigrant folks have already drawn their knives.

"There is a little more lipstick on this pig than there was before, but it's most certainly the same old pig," said Rep. Tom Tancredo, the Colorado Republican who has led the anti-immigrant movement in the House. And that's where most of the opposition is expected to come from, though more fair-minded members have introduced the same bill there.

When the rhetoric reaches fever pitch, senators and House members will have to remember that no matter how much folks cry "amnesty," this bill really doesn't take us there. It is *earned* residency.

Working here for six years, paying $2,000 and the fact that illegal immigrants who get the new work visas don't jump to the head of the line for permanent residency tell the tale. If this is amnesty, then pigs - with or without lipstick - fly.

The legislation also provides for better border security and, by allowing guest workers to travel to and from their mother countries, helps ensure that fewer of their family members join them here.

In short, unlike previous efforts, this legislation is serious and humane. Perhaps it can be improved upon in the legislative process, but it's a reasonable approach to a problem long in need of reasonableness.

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL (WI): DRUGS AND IMMIGRATION; Watering Mexico's Problems 08/27

Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Publication date: 2005-08-27

Two southwestern states, Arizona and New Mexico, declared states of emergency at their borders with Mexico over the issue of illegal immigration. Meanwhile, Nuevo Laredo and other Mexican border communities are awash in bloodshed as rival gangs kill one another and anyone else who gets in the way over control of the lucrative drug trade and its routes.

Mexico, gearing up for a presidential race in 2006, is arguably in tatters. Countries with effective economies, functioning judiciaries and law enforcement agencies that are not in thrall to or chilled by drug cartels have neither as major exports their own citizens nor cities requiring federal takeovers in feeble attempts to achieve order.

But these two problems illegal immigration and drugs have one thing in common that is routinely given short shrift by observers of the situation. That would be the United States its unhealthy and seemingly insatiable appetite for illegal drugs and its crying need for unskilled workers.

In this context, the saying attributed to Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz about a century ago "Poor Mexico! So far from God and so close to the United States" still resonates today.

Recently, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Antonio Garza said he closed the U.S. consulate in Nuevo Laredo to punish Mexico's government for its inability to stem border violence. Later, he said he was acting to protect U.S. lives. Earlier, he requested that the State Department issue three travel advisories alerting U.S. citizens and residents to the dangers of traveling to Mexico's border regions.

Garza was doing what had to be done, but in casting the consulate decision as a punishment, Garza seemed to have put on the same blinders as many others. Would you "punish" your neighbor if his vines have spread into your yard, ignoring that you planted the seeds and also water the vines?

There are concrete things the U.S. can do to help Mexico help itself, and, while improved border enforcement and security is part of the answer, solely relying on more fences and law enforcement at the border is simply more failed policy.

Clearly, new approaches to U.S. drug use are needed. These include more money available for treatment and prevention and less reliance on imprisoning vast portions of our population, not always in the unbiased fashion that a truly blind lady justice would demand.

On illegal immigration, Congress will soon consider two very different approaches of immigration reform. The one it should approve is sponsored, on the Senate side, by Arizona Republican John McCain and Massachusetts Democrat Edward Kennedy. It sets up a workable framework for a guest worker program that allows for an orderly migration for future guest workers and earned legalization for those who are already here and contributing to the U.S. economy.

This, too, would take the need for criminality out of the equation by giving both sets of workers a credible shot at legal residency. Fueling the illegality now is the basic fact that, though we need more and more workers, our immigration system seems to be geared toward keeping as many out as possible.

A better functioning Mexico is indeed a big part of the solution, but so is a more responsible and effective U.S. on both of these issues.

NEWS-JOURNAL (Daytona Beach, FL): Illegal immigration 08/22

Amnesty and assimilation, not guest-worker underclass

Last update: August 22, 2005

Between 1990 and 1994, an average of about 650,000 immigrants entered the country legally each year, while just over 400,000 entered illegally. Between 1995 and 1999, the number of legal entrants dropped slightly, while the number of illegal immigrants almost doubled. In the last four years, illegal immigrants continue to outnumber legal ones. The nation's immigration policies were not working in the 1990s, when border controls were progressively tightened as the decade wore on. They're working even less now.

Neither stricter controls nor a guest worker program is the answer. Easier pathways to legal immigration and, more crucially, assimilation, are.

The Bush administration has always been interested in reforming immigration policies, but it has neither committed to such reforms nor stuck by its earliest and most promising proposal: an amnesty for hundreds of thousands of immigrants living in the United States. President Bush is preparing to launch another attempt at reform. But the centerpiece of the proposal is its weakest point. It aims to give the half-way legal status of "guest workers" to immigrants entering the country from its southern borders while tightening policing of illegal immigrants within the United States. It is, in effect, a chamber of commerce proposal, and the president is depending on the business community to lobby for it, as businesses desperate for low-wage labor stand to gain most from such reform.

But what do immigrants themselves gain? Not much, besides a working pass that takes advantage of their labor now while attaching two- or three-year deadlines to their stay. One proposal would require those individuals to leave the country before becoming eligible for a new visa; another proposal would let them renew while in the United States. But every proposal sets a quota on the total number of such visas. That won't prevent workers from overstaying or looking to circumvent the system altogether, especially when such guest-worker programs provide no incentives for permanent residency and citizenship.

Creating colonies of foreign workers within the nation's borders is a short-term blurring of the illegal immigration problem. It incubates a long-term crisis -- the creation of a guest-worker underclass no different from slum-like colonias, those improvised towns of recent immigrants, legal and illegal, that line the U.S.-Mexico border.

Europe is a cautionary tale of guest-worker programs' failures. To help rebuild the continent after World War II, western European nations invited workers from Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa by the droves. But they were invited strictly as laborers, not as prospective citizens. While much was done to take advantage of the immigrants economically, virtually nothing was done to integrate immigrants culturally, politically and socially. The result is today's ghettos of resentful, entirely separate communities of mostly Muslim immigrants whose total European population is estimated to be between 15 and 20 million. Some among them, including the recent London bombers, are turning to radical Islam. The problem was not mass immigration. It was Europe's indifference to assimilation.

Europe doesn't have a tradition of immigration. The United States is all about immigration -- which is what makes the current problem on the nation's southern borders so distinct: It runs against the grain of the nation's traditions by grafting the worst of the European model on Latin American immigrants. Integration and assimilation are relegated to afterthoughts when the primary concern of an immigration policy is how to take advantage of immigrants as workers, rather than as prospective citizens. That leaves no great incentive

for immigrants to comply with rules designed to temporarily profit from them, then shunt them over the border again.

A semi-open border, rather than a semi-legal status, is the more likely solution: Grant those willing to work the open-ended legal status to work, but with an invitation to permanent residence after so many years, and citizenship after that. With the complicity of business and the consumer economy (none of us is innocent in this equation), illegal immigrants will keep pouring in anyway -- and, barring reasonable reform, swelling an underclass of separatism and bitterness. Better ratify their self-invitations with measures that welcome them in and integrate them. Permanence works. We're all its product.

NEWS-PRESS (Ft. Myers, FL): Bring illegal immigrants into the light 09/13
Article published Sep 13, 2005

The shocking spread of trafficking in human slaves in Florida and elsewhere in America is one more reason to reform America's chaotic immigration system.

With an estimated 10 million illegal aliens already here and maybe a million more arriving each year (who really knows?), there exists an immigration netherworld in America. All sorts of abuse thrives there — including, for example, the transportation of a teenage Guatemalan girl into domestic and sexual slavery in Cape Coral.

Whether immigration is reformed or not, these abuses must and can end. These are indecencies against which all humans should be protected in this country, whatever their immigration status.

We can be proud in Lee County of the local response to trafficking, once the seriousness of the problem was appreciated. Individuals, private organizations and law enforcement are providing leadership beyond our area, at the national level, including Anna Rodriguez of the Coalition Against Human Trafficking in Southwest Florida, federal prosecutor Doug Molloy, Lee Sheriff Mike Scott and the Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva.

But unreformed immigration makes their job much harder. Many illegal immigrants live in vulnerable isolation in an alien culture. They are not protected by our laws, and indeed sometimes fear even those authorities who wish only to help them.

This reform is a problem for Congress and the president. There are several proposals in play, and the basic needs are pretty clear by now — which doesn't mean they will be easy to implement.

Since our economy continues to suck many more foreign workers into America that the law admits legally, the effort to secure our borders or punish illegal employment has been erratic and weak. The way they are run now, many industries including agriculture, construction, food service and the hotel business would collapse without cheap foreign workers.

We should rationalize this situation, relaxing admission quotas so industries can legally get the foreign workers they truly need, assuming decent — not Third World — wages.

Then the investment is needed to make illegal border crossings much more difficult.

Some very tough issues must be faced, including some form of amnesty for some of the people already here illegally, and the deportation of others. But this must be done in the context of the re-assertion of control over immigration. Otherwise, reform will never get through Congress.

And innocent people will continue to pay a very high price for our failure at this fundamental exercise of national sovereignty.

CONTACT THEM:

- U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, (202) 224-5274
- U.S. Sen. Mel Martinez, (202) 224-3041
- U.S. Rep. Connie Mack, (202) 225-2536
- Senate Majority Leader William Frist, (202) 224-3135

- Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, (202) 224-3542
- House Speaker Dennis Hastert, (202) 225-0600
- House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, (202) 225-0100
- President George W. Bush, (202) 456-1111

HOW TO HELP:

The Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva has been a leader in the push to end modern-day slavery in Southwest Florida

For a presentation to your group on human trafficking, e-mail zontasancap@lycos.com.
On the Web: www.zontasancap.com has current information about human trafficking and links to other Web sites.

For information or to report possible cases: the Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking, 774-4300, or contact local law enforcement.

NEWS-TIMES (Danbury, CT): Any effort to legalize illegals must include increased security on nation's borders 06/17

June 17, 2005

In 1986, President Reagan championed an amnesty program for illegal immigrants who were living in the United States.

It was seen as a practical approach to the problem of illegal immigration, as well as a compassionate one.

Some 2.5 million illegal immigrants were estimated to be eligible, many with family ties in this country. Providing a legal way for them to stay in the United States was cheaper and easier than hunting them down for deportation.

Almost 20 years later, the Reagan amnesty program is not seen as an example of good public policy. While it helped the illegals already in the country, the plan encouraged more illegal immigrants to enter, hoping another amnesty program would be offered.

There are now an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants in the United States.

As public concern rises in response to Washington's failure to secure the borders and enforce immigration laws, President Bush and members of Congress have offered proposals for immigration reform.

They don't label them "amnesty," and they tie their proposals to vague promises about improved border security. But primarily the proposals center on turning illegal immigrants into legal workers.

President Bush proposed his "Fair and Secure Immigration Reform" plan last year. It would match "willing workers" with "willing employers." Employers could participate after taking steps to ensure "no American worker is available and willing to take a job."

The president says his program would allow what he calls "undocumented" workers to attain legal "temporary worker status," with an official identification card that would allow them to legally travel in and out of the United States.

The president says this immigrant worker plan should not allow participants to gain an advantage over immigrants who legally seek residence in the United States.

In Congress, U.S. Sens. John McCain and Edward Kennedy have proposed legislation that mirrors some of the Bush proposals.

Their plan includes a $1,000 fine and a rigorous criminal background check for an illegal immigrant seeking legalized status in the form of a six-year work visa.

After six years, that immigrant could apply for permanent residency by paying another $1,000, undergoing more screenings and demonstrating a knowledge of English and civics.

Significantly, the legislation would require a study of the law's impact on the U.S. labor market and adjustments to the number of authorized immigrant workers as a result of the findings.

Any effort to give legal status to illegal immigrants will face significant opposition. After all, at the heart of this issue is lawbreaking.

But Washington needs to confront this problem. It needs to secure the borders. It needs to know who is in the country. These are matters of national security and social order.

Leaving the borders porous, encouraging illegal immigrants to risk their lives to enter the United States, opening these illegal immigrants to abuse by employers, forcing states and municipalities to deal with the consequences of illegal immigration on their own -- these practices must end.

While some Americans would like to see a wholesale roundup of illegal immigrants, the president and Congress are clearly not going to do that.

So Washington must come up with a workable solution -- one that encourages illegal immigrants to come out of the shadows, one that provides for border security, one that is based on enforcement of the law.

NEWS-TIMES (Danbury, CT): Border control 10/19
President Bush, Congress delay action on immigration reform
October 19, 2005

The most vociferous critics of illegal immigration insist that illegals must be rounded up and sent home.

These critics never go beyond the suggestion of a roundup because that's where it gets complicated. Who would do the rounding up? Who would pay for it? How would it be done?

"It would take billions and billions and billions of dollars to do it," Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told a congressional committee Tuesday.

With bipartisan agreement that a massive roundup and deportation program is not doable or affordable, the immigration debate has turned to converting illegals into "guest workers" and improving border security.

As he signed a Homeland Security funding bill Tuesday, President Bush promised to "get control of our borders and make this country safer for all our citizens."

If the borders aren't under control and the country isn't safe, why aren't the president and members of Congress taking action? That's easy. Illegal immigration and border control are challenging issues.

The commonly used estimate is that there are 11 million illegal immigrants in the United States, but there are indications that the number is higher.

Most of these people are economic refugees who easily find jobs with employers who want to pay low wages and provide no benefits.

So proponents of reform seek ways to bring illegals out of the shadows, as the president says, and allow employers to maintain this pool of cheap labor.

President Bush has proposed allowing illegals to obtain guest worker status for six years, requiring them to return to their country after six years and then apply for another work visa.

U.S. Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Jon Kyl of Arizona, both Republicans, have proposed a similar guest worker program. They would require illegals to return to their country before obtaining a work visa.

U.S. Sens. John McCain, an Arizona Republican, and Edward Kennedy, a Massachusetts Democrat, would allow illegals to obtain a six-year work visa. At the end of six years, workers would be required to return to their country or begin the process of obtaining permanent worker status.

All of the proposals include improved border security and background checks on the illegals who apply for work visas.

Somewhere in the middle there surely is a compromise that is workable and responsible. Putting off action, however, is not responsible. Nor is it responsible to simply assume that a cheap labor pool is good for the U.S. economy.

Washington needs to do more than promise action on illegal immigration and border control; it must act.

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The failure to control our borders and enforce immigration laws is a national disgrace and a threat to homeland security.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (NY): Getting real on immigration 05/15

Originally published on May 15, 2005

Now that President Bush has signed into law the so-called Real ID act barring illegal aliens from getting full-fledged driver's licenses, it's time for Washington to get serious about immigration reform. Next item on the agenda must be passage of a guest-worker program.

The Real ID bill was the brainchild of congressional Republicans who presented it as a measure that was anti-terror, not anti-immigrant. It restricts state motor vehicle departments to issuing licenses only to people who prove citizenship or lawful immigrant status.

Nothing wrong with that, and the statute was helpfully amended to let states issue a second class of driving license to people who can't meet those criteria, presumably illegals. But that type of license will not be accepted as identification for any federal purpose, including boarding airplanes - limiting the possibility of hijackings by terrorists who enter the country surreptitiously.

In the end, the law accomplishes the goal of making the country safer while recognizing that barring the country's 10 million undocumented aliens from driving legally makes no practical sense. They're here and they're going to drive. They may as well do so legally, and with proper insurance. What the law does not accomplish - and could never accomplish, no matter how much its proponents wished - is stemming the flow of illegals into the country.

They're coming for jobs that Americans simply won't take, from harvesting crops to mowing lawns, and the pull is irresistible. The city is home to an estimated half-million illegals. Like it or not, they've been woven into the economy.

President Bush has called for making it easier for immigrants to enter the country to fill unwanted jobs for set periods of time. A bill introduced in the Senate last week by Republican John McCain and Democrat Ted Kennedy would make that possible by allowing workers to come for three-year terms, renewable once, if they have jobs lined up. After the fourth year, workers could apply for green cards.

Illegals who are already in the country would have a tougher road. They would have to pay a $2,000 fee, prove they are learning English and work legally for six years before applying for green cards. That's hardly jumping the line, and certainly not amnesty.

The bill would also tighten border security and levy heavier penalties for hiring illegals. Passage would help turn millions of people who are here, and who are not going home, into law-abiding taxpayers. They, the country and New York would benefit greatly.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (NY): Bush goes wobbly on immigration 06/13

Monday, June 13th, 2005

President Bush appears to be losing his resolve on immigration reform just as Congress is starting to consider legislation filled with smart ideas for controlling the country's borders and channeling immigrants legally into the workforce.

To hear House Majority Leader Tom DeLay tell it, Bush has decided to try to stop the flow of illegal immigrants with greater policing before pushing for a guest worker program. If that's the case - and the White House is decidedly mushy on the point - Bush is opting to satisfy the GOP anti-immigrant wing while engaging in pure folly.

No doubt the U.S. needs tighter borders. But the most effective way is to combine enforcement with letting immigrants in for set periods of time to take jobs Americans don't want. Enforcement alone has never been a match for the pull the U.S. exerts around the globe.

Bush himself proposed a guest worker program in January 2004. He now has a chance to deliver one, and strengthen enforcement, by getting behind the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, legislation sponsored by Sens. John McCain and Ted Kennedy. New York Sens. Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton should join him.

The bipartisan bill would award temporary visas to workers who could show they intend to return home once their permits expire. By paying a $500 fee and passing security, criminal and medical screenings, they would gain permission to work in the U.S. for three years, with an option to renew for another three. After four years of steady employment, they would be eligible to apply for a green card.

For illegals already here, the bill would mean a chance to come out of the shadows - but not without penalty. They'd have to pay a $1,000 fine and undergo tougher criminal and background checks to obtain a six-year work visa. To apply for a green card, they'd have to fork over another $1,000, prove they've paid their taxes, undergo more screenings and demonstrate a knowledge of English and civics.

In addition, the bill provides for strengthening border security - enhancing aerial surveillance, for example - and bolstering coordination among federal agencies and with foreign governments.

McCain-Kennedy would improve the government's ability to identify and deport foreigners who shouldn't be here and keep undesirables out, while supplying businesses with a crucial labor force.

Shutting the borders and building more jail cells, as the GOP suggests, would do none of that. The unstoppable tide of desperate workers is going to keep coming. Far better to give them a legal means to do so than push them further underground. Bush must stand up to the anti-immigration forces and insist on true reform.

NEW YORK SUN (NY): Calling Clinton and Schumer 06/06

New York Sun Staff Editorial
June 6, 2005
URL: http://www.nysun.com/article/14924

New Yorkers have a special interest in one piece of legislation awaiting the return of Congress today and tomorrow - the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, introduced in May by Senators McCain and Kennedy, and now sitting in the Senate Judiciary Committee. New York senators, take note: If there's anything wrong with this bill, it's that the immigration reform doesn't go far enough.

The McCain-Kennedy bill makes some important strides in the right direction. It would provide a process for immigrants currently in the country illegally to pay for their crime and move on with their lives, by levying a $2,000 fine to start the process of obtaining papers. This is designed to bring out of the shadows the millions of illegal immigrants (estimates of how many there are range from 8 to 12 million) who are already contributing to the American economy, while avoiding the moral hazard of an outright amnesty that would only reward past lawbreaking and encourage future crimes. Another example of progress is how the bill would more than double the number of employment-based visas for all categories to 290,000 a year.

The bill also includes a guest-worker program aimed at creating new, legal opportunities for persons who might otherwise sneak across the border. Up to 400,000 immigrants a year (equal to the estimated number of illegals who come annually) would qualify for work permits that would be good for up to six years before the immigrant would have to apply for a green card or leave. It's a step in the right direction, although Congress would do better to increase the number of available green cards before this provision creates a cohort of immigrants in limbo about their permanent status, which has been an unhappy consequence of Germany's guest-worker program. McCain-Kennedy does nothing to ease the red tape and bureaucratic backlog that plagues the asylum system.

The stakes are high, especially for New York, where immigration continues to be a major source of population growth, one of the pistons in the engine of economic growth. A 2003 study by the Public Policy Institute of New York State found that, absent immigration, New York state would have suffered a dramatic population decline of 519,000 in the 2000 census. Instead, new foreigners created net population growth of 1 million. All of which suggests that New York's senators would serve their state and city well were they to rouse themselves on this issue and fight for a more aggressive expansion of immigration.

NEW YORK SUN (NY): Coming to America 08/29

August 29, 2005

All that video footage of illegal immigrants streaming across the southern border is great television, but it's a symptom that something is rotten with American border policy. As Congress returns for the fall, it's time to do something, namely, pass reform along the lines of the McCain-Kennedy Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act.

We wrote about the bill in June ["Calling Clinton and Schumer," June 6], and it has only grown more necessary since then. McCain-Kennedy would more than double the total number of employment-based visas to 290,000 a year. It would allow up to 400,000 immigrants a year to enter the country as temporary guest workers for up to six years, during which time they could apply for green cards. And it would offer an amnesty program under which people already living here illegally could pay a fine and get their papers.

Keep those numbers in mind while considering the details of the latest hand-wringing at the border. On August 11, the governor of Arizona, Janet Napolitano, sent a pointed letter to the secretary of homeland security, Michael Chertoff, chastising Mr. Chertoff for not enforcing immigration laws aggressively enough. The next day, Governor Richardson of New Mexico declared a state of emergency in four border counties, a move Ms. Napolitano mimicked three days later. They will now each be able to spend $1.5 million on stepped-up border enforcement.

Meanwhile, on August 22, Mr. Chertoff replied to Mr. Napolitano's letter by accepting Arizona's offer to pay for an additional 200 detention beds, on top of the 2,000 beds the Immigration and Customs Enforcement bureau already maintains in the area. The 200 beds should make it possible to hold an extra 1,200 illegal immigrants each year before they are deported.

All of this effort will go to round up criminals who aren't really criminals except for their desire to work in America. The current rules are so unreasonably restrictive that people who would otherwise try to enter legally are instead forced into a netherworld of nighttime border crossings and human traffickers. Because tight restrictions push so many immigrants to enter illegally, the current rules are a nightmare to enforce. The 1,200 illegals in those 200 beds in Arizona will be just a drop in the bucket compared to the nearly 400,000 people who successfully cross the border under the radar each year, or the 510,000 who have been caught trying in Arizona alone since October 1.

Rather than simply ramping up enforcement of the old laws, true immigration reform will mean crafting new laws based on three pillars, says the Manhattan Institute's Tamar Jacoby. Reform should expand legal channels for immigration, enforce remaining restrictions to the letter, and offer a way to normalize the between 8 million and 12 million persons who are already here illegally. The McCain-Kennedy bill is particularly strong on the first and third pillars. A different bill, introduced by Senators Cornyn and Kyl, focuses on enforcement. This weekend, some details of President Bush's own plan emerged in the press; for example, he would modify the amnesty in McCain-Kennedy by making it available only to illegal immigrants who arrived before February 2004. It seems likely that a compromise will emerge blending elements of all these proposals.

The frustration of Ms. Napolitano and Mr. Richardson, not to mention of their constituents, is understandable. Whatever they hope to accomplish in the short term, their new enforcement actions aren't a long-term fix. They appear to recognize this. Both have endorsed some of the reforms that are included in McCain-Kennedy. Now it's the turn of Congress to grapple with the problem.

NEW YORK TIMES (NY): Major Immigration Surgery 05/20

Friday, May 20, 2005

The arrival last week of a sweeping, bipartisan immigration proposal in Congress brought forth the usual conflict between those who want a solution and those who just want an emotional issue to howl about. But this latest and most comprehensive package has already started earning support from Republicans and Democrats, business groups and unions, and several key Hispanic organizations. President Bush, who has been promising action on immigration for years, should quickly join them.

The long-awaited legislation comes from Senators John McCain and Edward Kennedy and Representatives Jeff Flake and Jim Kolbe, both Republicans from Arizona, and Luis Gutierrez, a Democrat from Illinois. Senator McCain said as he introduced the bill that it embraced the goals set down by Mr. Bush: making the borders more secure, filling jobs no American will take and finding a route to legality for workers who are already here illegally.

It is worth noting that three of the prime movers on this effort are from Arizona, a border state. They know firsthand about the hundreds who die each year trying to cross the desert from Mexico and about the many locals who are frantic about being overrun in this tragic human stampede.

Given the political tides, Senator McCain and others have focused on how their package could improve security at the borders. More than a million undocumented people are caught trying to cross into the country each year. Many make it: an estimated 11 million people are in the country illegally.

The goal is to get as many of these workers as possible to come out of their shadowy world. If that happened as planned, the strained government agencies that now deal with border issues could focus on immigrants with more sinister motives than the need for better wages.

At the center of this bill is a new temporary visa program that would allow foreign workers to fill jobs that no Americans will take. Undocumented immigrants already in the country would be eligible for these visas, which could last up to six years. To apply for permanent status, these workers would have to clear a number of hurdles, including security checks and requirements to pay back taxes and fines of $2,000 or more, and be proficient in English. Even then, they would go to the back of the immigration line. That process should be difficult enough to keep this from being an amnesty program, but not be so daunting that nobody would bother to try.

As Congressman Kolbe put it last week, this legislation "doesn't try to solve the hemorrhaging immigration problem with simply a Band-Aid. This is major surgery." The patient is definitely ready.

NEW YORK TIMES (NY): Making Immigration Work 08/05

August 1, 2005

For five years, President Bush has said that he really wants to reform immigration, but when the Senate finally took up the issue last week, the White House went missing. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao backed out of the hearing at the last minute, a gap that was noted with understandable irritation by Senator Arlen Specter, chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

With an estimated 11 million people in the country illegally, immigration is too big for the White House to ignore. If there is debate within the Bush administration about where immigration reform should go, there are several proposals that deserve consideration.

The best comprehensive bill so far comes from Senators John McCain, Republican of Arizona, and Edward Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, among others. The bill finds ways for the nation to deal with border security, a large underground society and the need for more unskilled labor in this country. It would set up a guest worker program and begin the process of making the illegal immigrants legal, by making participants pay back taxes and fines, then go to the end of the line to get a green card.

Two Republican senators, Jon Kyl of Arizona and John Cornyn of Texas, propose drastically beefing up border patrol. This would be a good thing if the proposal also offered a more realistic solution to the illegal population. It does not. Those in the country illegally would have to return home to apply for a green card - an invitation, it would seem, for most of them to stay hidden.

As Washington circles this tough issue, problems with immigration only grow. Almost 500,000 immigrants a year pour over the border to take backbreaking unskilled jobs that Americans don't want. The United States offers about one legal visa for every 100 workers who sneak into the country. But without that work force - over 4 percent of the country's workers by some estimates - the economy would sour. So we are left with an inhumane system, with jobs available to whoever can break into the country to get them.

Tamar Jacoby of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research summed up the goal at the Senate hearing last week: "to remain a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws." Mr. Specter has finally started the hard work required to reach that goal. Now the White House needs to put in some thought and muscle as well.

NEW YORK TIMES (NY): A Legacy in Immigration 09/26
September 26, 2005

Early in his administration, President Bush promised to tackle America's unsafe and unfair immigration system. That was before Sept. 11, before Afghanistan, before Iraq, before Katrina and Rita, so most people figured there was no more room on the president's platter for 11 million illegal residents of this country. But in recent days, administration officials have resumed their scheduled briefings with business leaders and thinkers and members of Congress to remind them that the White House is serious about fixing America's broken immigration policy.

President Bush deserves credit for pushing this difficult issue in the right direction, despite pressure from anti-immigration alarmists who want to build an electrified fence around America. Mr. Bush's people have made it clear that the president wants to focus on security at the border, enforcing immigration laws for employers and employees, and finally establishing a guest worker program that is not an amnesty program.

Participants in White House briefings say that they were told that the president would not support an immigration plan that is only about border security - as some Republicans in the House want. Mr. Bush wants a guest worker program, presumably one open to illegal immigrants already here.

For anyone really trying to untangle the immigration mess, the most taxing problem is how to draw those illegal workers out of the shadows and into the system. If a new immigration plan gives them work for a few years and then sends them home before they can apply to return, many will opt to stay underground. That is why it makes more sense to give these workers the choice of trying to stay here - even if it means a substantial fine and a longer wait to get a green card. The most workable bill, a bipartisan effort by Senators John McCain and Edward Kennedy, puts the fine at $2,000 and sends these applicants to the end of the line. That is the least America could do for people who do so much of our dirty work.

President Bush needs to sell the idea of a secure, workable and humane immigration policy to his own party, of course. But if he and his fellow Republicans followed those guidelines, comprehensive immigration reform could be among the most important and positive legacies of his presidency.

NEW YORK TIMES (NY): Time to Fix Immigration 10/14

October 14, 2005

In Connecticut, one mayor is thinking about identification cards to help illegal immigrants, while another mayor is trying to arrest day workers on street corners. In Burbank, Calif., local officials have required Home Depot to build a shelter for the large numbers of immigrant laborers waiting outside the store for work.

In bits and pieces, communities all over the country are trying desperately to deal with what is really an immense national problem. Only Washington can untangle an immigration mess that draws a growing number of illegal immigrants across the nation's borders every year. Labeled criminals or even "invaders" by a few in President Bush's own party, many of these immigrants are actually risking their lives to take on the jobs that many Americans have chosen to avoid. One contractor recently told The Los Angeles Times that if officials began cracking down on illegal immigrants, "who will rebuild New Orleans?"

Only a comprehensive plan, a bipartisan one with many of the ideas outlined earlier by President Bush, can address this national issue. Yes, such a plan needs to secure the borders, but it must also establish a guest worker program that serves industry, American workers and immigrants. And it needs to deal humanely and fairly with the 11 million immigrants who are already here illegally.

So far, a bill by Senators John McCain, the Arizona Republican, and Edward Kennedy, the Massachusetts Democrat, has the most workable solution. Their bill tries to lure people out of the shadows by offering a lengthy route to legal status. Immigrants working here illegally would pay a fine of at least $2,000, and go to the end of the long line of those trying to get legitimate working papers. Sending them home first to apply for permission to immigrate simply won't work.

Washington is still circling these ideas too slowly, forcing too many people and politicians to take matters into their own hands. It's time for Congress and the president to do their job. The local communities, in coming up with haphazard or dangerous solutions, like vigilantes in New Mexico and makeshift arrests for overcrowded housing on Long Island, are really crying out for a national cure.

LA NOTICIA (Charlotte, NC): La reforma de inmigración propuesta por McCain-Kennedy es profundamente necesaria 07/06

Edición No. 377 - 6 al 12 de julio del 2005

En mayo de este año, los senadores John McCain (R-AZ) y Edward Kennedy (D – Mass) presentaron una nueva reforma de inmigración a través del proyecto de ley titulado "Secure América and Orderly Inmigration Act". Esta legislación propuesta por McCain y Kennedy surgió a consecuencia de nuestro "quebrado" sistema de inmigración. A pesar de que en la última década nuestro gobierno se ha gastado millones de dólares tratando de fortalecer las leyes de inmigración, la realidad es que los inmigrantes continúan entrando ilegalmente a este país, alcanzando una media de unos 500.000 al año.

Se estima que en esta nación residen cerca de 11 millones de inmigrantes indocumentados. Los que se encuentran aquí no se irán, y cada día siguen llegando en masa. Simplemente no podemos reunir y deshacernos de millones de personas. Para complicar más el asunto, la mayoría de esos 11 millones de personas está trabajando. Varios sectores de nuestra economía dependen de esos trabajadores desautorizados. Su pérdida traería consecuencias devastadoras para nuestra economía.

La seguridad nacional es también una enorme preocupación. En este momento esos 11 millones de personas viven completamente fuera del alcance de las autoridades. Indocumentados, o peor aún, falsamente documentados, nunca se han chequeado sus antecedentes. No sabemos nada sobre su pasado ni, en algunos casos, sobre su historial criminal. El mundo escondido en el que viven está controlado por sindicatos criminales, un sistema laxo en el que pueden esconderse fácilmente terroristas internacionales.

Por lo tanto, no cabe duda de que nuestras leyes de inmigración necesitan una reforma masiva. Pero, por supuesto, nadie se ha puesto de acuerdo en cómo hacerla exactamente. Aquellos que están en contra de la inmigración se aferran fuertemente a la creencia de que cualquier reforma que ayude o legalice a los inmigrantes implica "recompensar" a aquellos que han quebrantado la ley al entrar al país ilegalmente. Pero la realidad es que estos inmigrantes están aquí, están trabajando y están contribuyendo con nuestra economía. No se están yendo, y cada día llegan más. Una solución con más sentido común sería encontrar una manera de legalizar a todos aquellos que se encuentran aquí por razones legítimas – como trabajar y formar una familia– y establecer un sistema que, documentando a todos los inmigrantes, pueda identificar y protejernos de aquellos que quieren hacerle daño a este país.

La propuesta de McCain y Kennedy, aunque no es perfecta, es un valiente paso hacia esa solución. Cubre todos los aspectos relacionados con la inmigración: seguridad fronteriza, medidas contra los criminales, alianzas con otros países para promover un patrón de inmigración "circular" en el que eventualmente los inmigrantes regresen a su país natal, imposición, y lo más importante, un programa "esencial de visas de trabajo".

Este programa de trabajo no es un amnistía. Establece un fuerte sistema de condiciones que los inmigrantes ilegales deben tener en cuenta si van a venir a este país.

Los solicitantes deben registrarse con el gobierno. Deben mostrar que tienen un trabajo en Estados Unidos, pagar una tarifa de $500, además de algunos otros gastos por solicitud, y esclarecer todos los asuntos médicos, de seguridad, etc. Los solicitantes que ya estén viviendo aquí deberán pagar todos los impuestos atrasados y una multa de $2,000 y someterse a una revisión de sus antecedentes que muestre su historia laboral, un pasado judicial limpio, y que no son un problema para la seguridad.

La visa es válida por tres años, y puede ser renovada para un total de 6. Al final de este periodo los

trabajadores deberán regresar a su país, o estar tramitando su residencia. Llegados a ese punto deberán probar que han estado estudiando inglés y que conocen la historia estadounidense y su gobierno. Y entonces, cuando de verdad la soliciten, es cuando deberán ir "al final de la lista."

Este programa de visas de trabajo tiene muchos beneficios para los inmigrantes. Nunca más serán considerados como que-brantadores de la ley y podrán trabajar y vivir libremente en este país. Les protege de sufrir abusos por parte de contratistas o empleadores extranjeros. Les da remedios para que sus derechos no puedan ser violados. La visa es "portátil", permitiéndoles cambiar de trabajo y llevársela consigo. Les dará autorización para viajar, por lo que podrán visitar sus países de origen y regresar a Estados Unidos. Sus esposos e hijos pueden gozar también de todos estos derechos.

Pero este programa tienen también sus fallos. Permite una estadía de seis años. Una vez finalice este periodo se supone que los trabajadores con visa han de regresar a sus países. Incluso si la visa de trabajo de un inmigrante no se ha vencido, y éste pierde su trabajo en Estados Unidos y no es capaz de encontrar otro en un máximo de 60 días, debe regresar a su país natal. Inclusive en pocos años, la mayoría de la gente es capaz de construir una vida aquí que les hará reticentes a volver a su país. Teniendo en cuenta el gran número de inmigrantes indocumentados que han estado en este país por una década o más, y se han instalado, comprado casas y negocios y criado niños que son ciudadanos estadounidenses, es improbable que alguno de ellos quiera regresar a su país, un país al que ya no ve como su "hogar". Al igual que se nos ha hecho imposible devolverlos a sus países cuando era inmigrantes indocumentados, se nos hará igualmente imposible devolverlos como inmigrantes documentados. Esto les obligará una vez más a vivir una vida en las sombras, forjándose identidades falsas y llevando a cabo otras actividades que rompan la ley.

No es la solución perfecta. Pero es la mejor solución que se ha propuesto hasta ahora.

LA NOTICIA (Charlotte, NC): McCain-Kennedy immigration reform is sorely needed 07/06
Edición No. 377 - 6 al 12 de julio del 2005

This past May, Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) proposed a new immigration reform bill entitled the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act. The McCain-Kennedy legislation was prompted by our "broken" immigration system. Despite the fact that our government has spent billions of dollars in the last decade to enforce immigration laws, the reality is that immigrants still enter this country illegally, at the rate of almost 500,000 a year.

The number of undocumented immigrants in this nation is estimated at nearly 11 million. The ones here are not leaving, and masses are arriving every day. We simply cannot round up and remove millions of people. To complicate matters, most of those 11 million are working. Several sectors of our economy now depend on those unauthorized workers. A loss of those workers would have devastating consequences on our economy.

National security is a huge concern, too. Right now these 11 million workers live entirely beyond the reach of authorities. Undocumented or, worse, falsely documented, they have never had background checks. We know nothing about their pasts or, in some cases, criminal records. The underground world they inhabit is controlled by criminal syndicates. International terrorists can hide easily in this lax system.

So there is no question our immigration laws need massive reform. But, of course, no one agrees exactly how to do it. Immigration naysayers hold strongly to the belief that any reform that helps or legalizes undocumented immigrants is "rewarding" those who have broken the law by entering the country illegally. But the reality is that these immigrants are here, they are working and contributing to our economy. They aren't leaving, and more are arriving every day. A more commonsense solution would be to find a way to legalize those who are here for legitimate reasons—to work and raise a family—and put a system in place

that, by documenting all immigrants, can identify and protect us from those who wish this country harm.

The McCain-Kennedy Act, while not perfect, is a courageous step towards that solution. The bill covers all aspects related to immigration: border security, criminal alien measures, partnerships with other countries to promote a "circular" migration pattern where immigrants eventually return to their home country, enforcement issues, and most importantly, an "essential worker visa program."

The worker program is not amnesty. It establishes a tough set of conditions that illegal immigrants must meet if they are to come to this country. Applicants must register with the government. They must show that they have a job in the U.S., pay a fee of $500 in addition to application fees, and clear all security, medical, and other checks. Applicants already living here must pay all back taxes and a $2,000 fine, then undergo a series of background checks to show work history, a clean criminal record, and that they are not a security problem.

The visa is valid for three years, and can be renewed one time for a total of 6 years. At the end of the visa period workers either have to return home or be in the pipeline for a green card. At that point, they must prove they have been studying English and have mastered the rudiments of U.S. history and government. And then, when they do apply, they must go to the "back of the line."

The worker visa program has many advantages to immigrants. It means they are no longer law-breakers, but can live and work freely in this country. It protects them from abuse by foreign labor contractors or employers. It gives them remedies for violations of their rights. The visa is portable, allowing workers to move from job to job. It will give them authorization to travel, making them able to travel to their home country and return to the U.S. Their spouses and children are also eligible for these benefits.

But the worker visa program also has flaws. It allows a six-year maximum stay. Then the visa workers are expected to return to their home country. Even if an immigrant worker's visa hasn't expired, if he loses his U.S. job and can't find another one after 60 days, he must return to his home country. Even in a few years, most people can build a life here that will make them resistant to returning to their country. Given the sizeable number of undocumented immigrants who have spent a decade or more in this country and have put down roots, bought homes and businesses, and raised children who are U.S. citizens, it's unlikely any one of them are going to return to a county they no longer see as "home." Just as we've been unable to send them back as undocumented immigrants, it will be just as impossible to make them return as legal immigrants. This will force them once again to resort to life in the shadows, forging illegal identities and committing other law-breaking activities.

It is not a perfect solution. But it's the best solution that's been proposed so far.

LA NOTICIA (Charlotte, NC): La reforma de inmigración propuesta por McCain-Kennedy es la mejor 08/31

Edición No. 385 - 31 de agosto al 6 de septiembre del 2005
En estos momentos hay tres grandes reformas de inmigración que están siendo discutidas en Washington: el programa "Visa Guest Worker", del presidente Bush, la "Comprenhensive Inmigration and Reform Act", propuesta por Kornyn y Kyl, y el proyecto migratorio sugerido por McCain y Kennedy, denominado "Secure America and Orderly Inmigration".

El programa de trabajadores temporales propuesto por Bush permitiría a los inmigrantes -ilegales o no-trabajar legalmente en Estados Unidos por un período de tres años y con una visa de trabajo. Uniría a trabajadores extranjeros con empleadores que ofertan puestos de trabajo que no pueden ser realizados por ciudadanos estadounidenses. A los inmigrantes se les permitiría traerse a sus familias, siempre y cuando pudieran responsabilizarse de su manutención. Además, podrían abandonar el país libremente como turistas y regresar de nuevo sin problemas. Sin embargo, tan pronto como se termine su empleo, o si su permiso de trabajo de tres años no es renovado, deberán regresar a su país de origen. Además de eso, cabe señalar algunos otros detalles.

Las propuestas de Kornyn-Kyl y McCain Kennedy son mucho más comprensivas y detalladas que la presentada por Bush. Tienen dos puntos en común: (1) ambos permiten que aquellos inmigrantes indocumentados que viven en Estados Unidos reciban estatus legal temporal, siempre que puedan demostrar que están trabajando y que no tienen historial criminal; (2) proveen una visa especial para aquellos que se encuentran fuera de EEUU, para que puedan ingresar al país y ocupar puestos de trabajo vacantes que requieran pocas o ningunas cualidades profesionales.

Sin embargo, aparte de esto, ambas propuestas difieren bastante. Bajo la propuesta de McCain-Kennedy, el estatus migratorio (H-5B) permitiría al inmigrante -su esposo/a e hijos- quedarse por un período inicial de seis años. Una vez que la visa expire después de ese tiempo, el trabajador debería regresar a su país, o bien estar tramitando su residencia permanente (green card). La propuesta permite a los inmigrantes que se acojan a la visa H-5B ajustar su estatus para ser residente permanente, siempre y cuando tengan una oferta de trabajo, paguen una tarifa de $1,000 y cumplan con algunos otros requisitos.

Por su parte, Kornyn y Kyl, en su propuesta, crean un estatus, apto para ciertos inmigrantes indocumentados, denominado Deferred Mandatory Departure, DMD, (Salida Aplazada Obligatoria). El proyecto provee incentivos a aquellos individuos que abandonen EEUU inmediatamente, y ninguno puede permanecer aquí más de cinco años. Con este proyecto de ley no existe ningún tipo de mecanismo de legalización.

Los esposos e hijos de inmigrantes con visa H-5B tienen permiso para trabajar; los familiares de quienes posean DMD no están autorizados para trabajar y deberán además pagar una tarifa adicional por estar en este país.

Los inmigrantes con H-5B podrán cambiar de trabajo y viajar al extranjero. Un individuo con DMD también puede salir al extranjero, pero sólo puede trabajar para empleadores que participen en el programa.

El proyecto de McCain-Kennedy establece que los inmigrantes con H-5B deberán tener los mismos derechos que los trabajadores estadounidenses con trabajos similares, contemplados bajo las leyes laborales estatales y locales. Por su parte, la propuesta de Kornyn-Kyl no ofrece protección real a los trabajadores.

El proyecto de ley de McCain-Kennedy asegura la confidencialidad de información dada por los aspirantes a una H-5B. El de Kornyn-Kyl no sólo no provee tal confidencialidad, sino que además requiere que los
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solicitantes de DMD reconozcan por escrito, y bajo juramento, que se encuentran en el país de forma ilegal y están sujetos a ser retirados o deportados.

Claramente la propuesta de McCain-Kennedy ofrece la solución más práctica e inteligente a la reforma de inmigración. Ha tenido en cuenta la realidad de inmigración en este país. Los inmigrantes se han vuelto imprescindibles para nuestra vitalidad económica. Los empleadores quieren contratarlos porque son una mano de obra confiable. Los inmigrantes quieren esos trabajos, pese a los bajos sueldos y peligros a los que se exponen, porque aún así están mucho mejor de lo que estarían en sus países de origen.

Por supuesto que la inmigración representa un reto para todos nosotros -la policía, el sistema de salud, las escuelas, los servicios públicos- pero la respuesta no está en mantener un sistema que criminaliza a quienes trabajan duro. Si podemos ayudar a que los inmigrantes se ayuden así mismos, entonces todos saldremos ganando.

LA NOTICIA (Charlotte, NC): McCain-Kennedy is the best of immigration reform 08/31

Edición No. 385 - 31 de agosto al 6 de septiembre del 2005

Currently, there are three major immigration reform proposals being considered in Washington: President Bush's Guest Worker Visa program, the Kornyn-Kyl Comprehensive Immigration and Reform Act, and the McCain-Kennedy Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act.

The guest worker program proposed by Bush would allow immigrants—illegal or legal—to work in the U.S. legally for three years on a work visa. It would match willing foreign workers with willing employers when no Americans can be found to fill the job. The immigrants would be entitled to bring family members in with them, as long as they can support them. And the immigrants could legally leave the country for visits and return without liability. If their jobs end or if their three-year permits are not renewed, the immigrants would have to return to their home countries. Beyond that, there are few details.

The Kornyn-Kyl and McCain-Kennedy Acts are far more comprehensive and detailed than Bush's proposal. They have two provisions in common: (1) they both allow for undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S. to transfer to a temporary legal status if they are working and pass background and criminal checks; (2) they provide a special visa to those outside the U.S. to enter the country and fill available jobs that require few or no skills.

However, beyond that, they differ greatly. Under McCain-Kennedy, the immigrant's status (H-5B) entitles him—and his spouse and children—to stay for an initial period of six years. At the end of the visa period the worker would have to return home or be in the pipeline for a green card. The bill provides a means for H-5B immigrants to adjust to permanent residence status upon meeting a prospective work requirement, paying an additional $1,000 fee, and fulfilling additional eligibility criteria.

Kornyn-Kyl creates a status for eligible undocumented immigrants called Deferred Mandatory Departure (DMD). This bill provides incentives for aliens to depart the U.S. immediately, and none can stay longer than five years. There is no legalization mechanism with this bill.

The H-5B immigrant's spouse and children are authorized to work; the DMD immigrant's family members are not authorized to work and must also pay an additional fee to be in this country.

H-5B immigrants may change employers at will and may travel abroad. A DMD alien can also travel abroad, but may only be employed by employers authorized to participate in the program.

The McCain-Kennedy bill provides that H-5B immigrants shall have the same rights as similarly employed U.S. workers under applicable federal, state, and local labor and employment laws. The Kornyn-Kyl act offers

no real worker protections.

The McCain-Kennedy bill provides for the confidentiality of information furnished by H-5B applicants. Not only does the Kornyn-Kyl bill not provide for such confidentiality, but it also requires that DMD applicants must acknowledge in writing and under oath that they are unlawfully present and subject to removal or deportation.

Clearly the McCain-Kennedy proposal offers the most intelligent and practical solution to immigration reform. It has taken into account the reality of the immigration situation in this country. Immigrants have become invaluable to our economic vitality. Employers want to hire them because they are a reliable source of labor. Immigrants want the jobs because, despite low wages and often dangerous conditions, they still fare better than they would in their home country.

Of course immigration represents a challenge for all of us—the police, the health institutions, the schools, public services—but the answer is not to maintain a system that criminalizes hard-working people. If we can help these immigrants help themselves, then everyone benefits.

LA OPINIÓN (Los Angeles, CA): Un buen plan sobre inmigración 05/13

05/13/05

El proyecto de ley presentado por los senadores Ted Kennedy y John McCain es una nueva esperanza en medio del agrio debate sobre inmigración de los últimos tiempos. La Ley de Seguridad e Inmigración Ordenada de 2005 es un proyecto bipartidista que toma en cuenta los distintos aspectos que debe integrar una extensa y adecuada reforma migratoria: la seguridad, la economía y el factor humano. La propuesta merece una atenta consideración y debe ser la base para los cambios necesarios en las leyes actuales.

La medida contiene cláusulas que refuerzan la seguridad de la frontera a través de varias iniciativas internas, al mismo tiempo que reconoce la condición binacional de la frontera alentando acuerdos migratorios y de seguridad con México. También refuerza el control de la documentación para evitar hacer más difícil su falsificación al igual que las auditorías sobre el sector privado que contrata a los indocumentados.

Además, el proyecto responde a las inquietudes económicas y humanas con dos tipos de visa para los trabajadores temporales y los indocumentados que residen en el país. Es justo que establezca una senda para la residencia permanente después de un tiempo determinado y cumpliendo una serie de requisitos como el pago de impuestos, costosas multas y averiguación de antecedentes, entre otros. La cláusula sobre reunificación familiar es otro aspecto humano que por fortuna está tomado en cuenta.

Es significativo que entre sus auspiciadores principales estén el senador McCain y los congresistas Jeff Flake y Jim Kolbe, todos ellos republicanos de Arizona, un estado que se halla en el centro del debate migratorio. Este respaldo revela que el proyecto de ley contiene un adecuado balance de intereses y, fundamentalmente, es una respuesta válida al dilema de la inmigración indocumentada. Esperamos que tanto la conducción legislativa republicana como la Casa Blanca reconozcan la importancia de esta medida y respalden la propuesta de sus representantes que realmente conocen estos problemas, en vez de sucumbir ante los demagogos.

Las continuas muestras de antagonismo hacia los indocumentados, desde el Proyecto Minuteman hasta el REAL ID, reflejan la urgencia de una amplia reforma migratoria que brinde soluciones más allá de simples castigos. La legislación Kennedy-McCain abarca todos los aspectos relevantes para actualizar las leyes de inmigración. En ella hay cláusulas para todos los gustos y disgustos, garantizando así una ecuanimidad en su enfoque. Éste es un proyecto de ley complejo como lo es el tema de la inmigración y realista como el mismo asunto lo amerita. Por eso merece un respaldo unánime y una pronta aprobación.

LA OPINIÓN (Los Angeles, CA): Time to talk about immigration 06/06

LUNES 6 de Junio de 2005

The debate over immigration has taken on force at the national level, for better or worse. The discussion about the presence of undocumented immigrants in this country never disappeared from the map, but this summer it promises to be a hot topic, from the legislative discussions in Congress to the border, where groups of civilian vigilantes pretend to replace the Border Patrol.

In the midst of all these raw emotions we must not lose sight of the fact that today we have a real opportunity for a just reform of immigration laws. We will have to see whether legislators have the courage and the intelligence to separate the noise from the nuggets and do what's best for the country.

No one doubts that there is an urgent need for immigration reform. The two proposals in the Senate, together with the interest the White House has for the subject, provide the best possibility in many years for serious reform. The most promising proposal, Kennedy-McCain, meets the minimum essential requirements of national security, the need for labor and the human factor, by giving immigrants the hope of legalizing their status after hard work and exemplary conduct. The proposal of Senators John Cornyn and Jon Kyl, on the other hand, introduced last week, limits itself to reinforcing the borders, tracking the hiring of undocumented workers and establishing a limited temporary workers program.

We have in the Senate today a ray of hope that between the two proposals legislators will be able to produce a law that is beneficial to everyone. That possibility is more complicated in the House of Representatives where the demagoguery on this subject threatens to trample all common sense. Nevertheless, White House support for just and fair immigration reform is key since now is the time to talk seriously about immigration.

La Opinión, Los Angeles via El Diario/La Prensa, New York, NY

ORLANDO SENTINEL (FL): OK guest-worker plan 08/22

Our position: It's overdue for Congress to rescue the borders from further chaos.

August 22, 2005

Fed up with federal inaction to stem illegal immigration and other crime along their states' borders with Mexico, the governors of Arizona and New Mexico recently declared law-enforcement emergencies. That's so they can throw even more resources at protecting their borders.

California's governor is considering a similar declaration.

Clearly, it is past time for Congress to fix this country's broken immigration system.

There are at least 10 million immigrants living in this country illegally, including some 850,000 in Florida. More are slipping across the border every day, despite huge increases in money and manpower intended to stop them.

Yet the overwhelming majority of illegal immigrants come north in search of work and a better life for their families. They fill low-wage jobs shunned by Americans and help keep the economy humming. Immigration quotas are much too low for them to enter lawfully.

Congress needs to create a broader legal channel for such immigrants. Doing so would let law-enforcement agencies target their limited resources on stopping terrorists and other hardcore criminals at the border.

Congress doesn't have to start from scratch; solutions already have been proposed. The most sensible proposals would create a guest-worker program that would let immigrants who register with the government and pass background checks temporarily fill jobs unclaimed by Americans.

Congress needs to work out the details -- so that security can be enhanced, the needs of the economy can be met, and the rule of law can be restored along the border.

ORLANDO SENTINEL (FL): Fix broken system 10/05

Our position: An increase in illegal immigrants makes the guest-worker plan even more urgent.

October 5, 2005

In the latest evidence that the U.S. immigration system is broken, a study from the Pew Hispanic Center showed the number of illegal immigrants last year, at 562,000, exceeded the number of legal immigrants, at 455,000.

Congress needs to fix the system. The current, broken one mocks the law and endangers national security. Law-enforcement agencies can't keep track of the illegal immigrants entering the country, or the ones already here -- at least 10 million, including some 850,000 in Florida, who live and work in the legal shadows.

But any fix from Congress needs to recognize the economic reality that the overwhelming majority of illegal immigrants come here to work. In fact, the Pew study showed that immigration levels are largely determined by the availability of jobs in this country.

Tighter border security alone is not the answer. Congress has increased spending in that category more than tenfold over the past 20 years without stanching the flow of illegal immigrants.

President George W. Bush has called for a guest-worker program with temporary visas for immigrants who fill jobs unclaimed by Americans. Such a system would establish a broader, legal channel of entry for foreign workers and let law-enforcement agencies focus their attention on real threats to public safety. Mr. Bush's call has drawn bipartisan support.

Properly designed and managed, a guest-worker program would meet the needs of the U.S. economy while enhancing national security. Congress needs to get serious about creating such a system.

PALM BEACH POST (FL): New hope in Congress on immigration . . .05/28

Palm Beach Post Editorial
Saturday, May 28, 2005

Until recently, Congress has been the wrong place to look for clear thinking in the strident national debate over immigration policy. A new bill introduced last week with bipartisan support in the House and Senate, however, may have changed that.

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act proposes a reasonable approach to dealing with the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants already in the country and would create a framework that allows the federal government more ability to control borders and improve homeland security. The bill is an expanded version of the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act (AgJOBS) that has been stalled despite the support of more than 60 senators. AgJOBS proposed a guest-worker program for farmworkers that allowed them incremental steps to legal status and residency. The Secure America bill expands most of the same principles to cover all undocumented workers.

Unlike President Bush's guest-worker proposal, which offered no specifics, Congress' plan comes with details and clear standards. The bill would offer temporary status to workers in this country and to migrating workers who can prove they have jobs waiting here. Employers would be required to hire Americans first if possible before turning to foreigners. An electronic registry would monitor compliance of employees and employers. Immigrants would be subject to background checks. The federal government would provide them with a six-year path to residency, but they would have to pay at least $2,000 in fines and back taxes and also demonstrate proficiency in English. With a system in place to track immigrant workers, the government could shift more resources to anti-terrorist efforts.

The bill also puts responsibility for immigration matters where it belongs: in Washington, not with state and municipal governments. Congress needs to act because indecision in Washington is leading to impulsive decisions in the states. This month, the police chief in New Ipswich, N.H. — population 550 — charged an illegal Mexican working construction with criminal trespass. "What I'm trying to do is find a manner in which we can get the federal government to step up to the plate and start helping out here," W. Garrett Chamberlain told *The Boston Globe*. "It's basically a situation here where right now if you make it past the border patrol, you're free and clear. There's no interior enforcement for illegal immigration in the United States. What I'm hoping to do is find a way that if the feds aren't going to help us out, then local enforcement can take care of it."

Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., introduced the new legislation in the Senate, and Reps. Luis V. Gutierrez, D-Ill., Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., and Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., have sponsored it in the House. The interest of Arizona's delegation stems from the increasing flow of Mexicans across the state's border and the rise of the Minutemen and other citizen patrols since the government tightened enforcement in Texas and California. Last week, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano vetoed a bill that would have given police the power to enforce federal immigration laws. That is the kind of misguided proposal that Secure America would help prevent.

PALM BEACH POST (FL): Border cries out again 08/22

Palm Beach Post Editorial

Monday, August 22, 2005

The governors of Arizona and New Mexico declared states of emergency last week. There was no natural disaster, epidemic or terrorist attack — just more indifference from the federal government.

Janet Napolitano and Bill Richardson said the flow of illegal immigrants from Mexico demands extraordinary measures, and the states can't wait for Washington to do something. Gov. Napolitano's declaration freed up $1.5 million in state disaster money to assist local governments. Gov. Richardson sent $1.75 million in emergency money to cash-strapped border counties. They will use the money to hire more police to turn back migrant workers and drug smugglers. Both governors are inundated with complaints about stolen vehicles, property damage and trespassing.

The federal government's approach to immigration surely qualifies as a disaster. The numbers are staggering. Since October, the Border Patrol says its agents have arrested more than 510,000 people trying to cross just in Arizona. How many made it into the United States is anyone's guess. So is how many died in the desert. The governors hope to curb the growing ranks of vigilante groups policing the border without training and with dubious agendas. Help from Congress or the Bush administration remains an unkept promise.

President Bush says he will push this fall for a guest-worker plan that would allow millions of undocumented immigrants to hold jobs legally in the U.S., then return to their homelands. But the president's proposal falls short of that offered by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who do a better job striking the right balance and offering immigrants attainable incentives to play by the rules. Their proposal requires migrants who entered the country illegally to pay back taxes and fines, then work for six years before applying for legal residence.

Until Congress acts, the federal government has little to offer. The Department of Homeland Security announced last week that it would air a series of public service announcements on Mexican television. The ads will talk about the dangers of suffocation when children are smuggled in the trunks of cars and the perils of crossing the desert in the heat of summer.

Last year, Mr. Bush said he would hire 2,000 agents to shore up border security. Only several hundred have been hired. Govs. Napolitano and Richardson know that TV commercials and Washington promises won't solve their states' problems.

PALM BEACH POST (FL): The immigration answer 08/30

Palm Beach Post Editorial

Tuesday, August 30, 2005

When it comes to immigration reform, people on all sides of the issue can come to the debate with legitimate arguments.

Vigilante groups along the Southwest border are right that the flow of illegals into the United States is out of control, and the government has failed to stanch it. The governors of New Mexico and Arizona were right to declare states of emergency. New Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff is right when he pledges to make border control a priority. Intelligence agencies have reason to worry about terrorists sneaking into the country from Mexico.

U.S. business leaders are right when they argue that the economy is dependent on a reliable flow of foreign labor that will fill the menial jobs Americans don't want. Illegal immigrants aren't exaggerating when they say there is virtually a limitless supply of employers who want them to come and work. Officials in cities and towns such as Jupiter and Lake Worth are correct when they say that the federal government's inaction has forced them to deal with problems that Washington should have prevented.

President Bush and many members of Congress also are right when they argue that the nation needs to develop a guest-worker plan that would allow immigrants to cross legally, enter a government-run system and fill vacant jobs. Mr. Bush — and Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who are backing the idea in Congress — are correct when they say that an effective guest-worker plan can enhance national security, cracking down on drug smugglers and helping Mr. Chertoff's agency monitor who's here. Supporters are right when they argue that border control and a guest-worker plan will complement each other.

As usual, politics is an obstacle to reform. President Bush hopes to put forth the many missing details to his guest-worker plan soon, but he has no chance of satisfying both business leaders and conservative Republicans who are opposed to residency incentives for immigrants, let alone anything resembling amnesty. The McCain-Kennedy bill has the right balance of incentives and requirements. It would offer guest workers three-year visas and the chance for green cards after six years, but also require them to register, go through background checks, and pay back taxes and a $2,000 fine. Creating a legal path and a registry would place immigrant workers into two groups: those who play by the rules and those who don't. Mr. Chertoff can target his resources on the latter, instead of trying to sort out the undefined, underground mess that currently exists.

The president and the two senators are close enough that compromise is possible. That would be right for the country.

PASADENA STAR-NEWS (CA): Guest worker plan sensible 05/22

Sunday, May 22, 2005 - CONGRESS finally has before it a plan to reform immigration policy in a way that actually makes sense by establishing a structured guest-worker program.

The legislation, drafted by Republican Sen. John McCain and Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy and supported by a bipartisan group of lawmakers, has drawn widespread praise.

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 reflects the real world, acknowledging the positive economic benefits of illegal workers while addressing domestic security concerns and other negative effects on American jobs and social services such as health care.

Much reflects what President Bush had initially sought. Importantly, those who wish to take advantage of the three-year visa offered under the plan must have employment waiting for them. This is similar to Bush's plan that paired willing workers with willing employers.

Then applicants must pass security and health checks before paying a $500 fee considerably less than the money paid to "coyotes' to be smuggled across the border. The guest-worker program with an initial 400,000 visas available could conceivably end this ugly enterprise.

The visas can be renewed once for a total of six years. After that, workers must return home or be in line for a green card. U.S. employers could sponsor guest workers for green cards.

Those already in the United States illegally, estimated to be upward of 11 million, would have to register with the government, pass the background check and pay a $2,000 fine to obtain a visa good for six years.

While we like much of this bill that addresses illegal aliens now residing here, we believe Congress should make it easier for this underground work force to come out in the open. A $2,000 fine seems excessive and not likely to be met by many who often take menial jobs.

Let's offer carrots, not sticks at this point. Otherwise, we don't foresee folks lining up to gain legitimacy.

For permanent resident status, they would have to work for six more years and prove they were learning English. If these residents do not want to become citizens, it's a fair proposal.

However, a citizenship path must be established for those who wish to become Americans. After all, many have been in this country for more than six years already and have established lives, families and even businesses, contributing to the economy.

Several benefits would be felt immediately under the act. Domestic security would be improved, as the United States would have a system to check and track what is now a huge pool of working illegal immigrants.

Security at the borders would be tighter, and more orderly, with fewer deaths and accidents from unsafe border crossings (more than 2,000 migrants have died since 1998 attempting to cross the border in dangerous areas).

And, importantly, a guest-worker program would allow for the collection of taxes to support public services such as schools and hospitals.

The act also reauthorizes reimbursement for criminal-alien incarceration and federal reimbursements for emergency care for this population, both desperately needed in Southern California. Too, part of the fines and fees under the act will go toward uncompensated health- care costs.

While we'd like to see further refinement, this seems a good first step in addressing what Congress has ignored for far too long.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE (PA): Welcome bill: The McCain-Kennedy plan reforms immigration 06/01

Wednesday, June 01, 2005

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Immigration reform is an issue that liberals and conservatives have rarely agreed on.

The common assumption is that conservatives want to limit who can come into the United States because of their twin fears of terrorism and loss of cultural hegemony. Liberals usually favor opening the borders because they like the diversity that comes from more broad-based immigration.

So when Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican, and Sen. Ted Kennedy, the Democrat from Massachusetts, joined forces on a bill to overhaul immigration, those across the political spectrum took notice -- and applauded. The bill would upgrade border security and track immigrant workers and travelers while providing temporary work visas for unskilled laborers. It would also make it easier for legal immigrants to bring their families into the country while easing federal reimbursement to hospitals for emergency care of undocumented aliens.

In other words, the McCain-Kennedy immigration plan balances the interests of national security and legal immigrants caught in a netherworld of punitive laws.

Recently, an interfaith network of religious groups has taken up the banner of immigration reform. Reaching deep into the tradition of providing hospitality to strangers and wayfarers, they've settled upon the McCain-Kennedy bill as a good place to begin.

Pennsylvania Sen. Arlen Specter has heard from them. As a leader of the moderate wing of the Republican party, Sen. Specter's support of the McCain-Kennedy bill would go a long way in generating enthusiasm among party loyalists on both sides.

In an era of partisan squabbling, immigration reform is an issue upon which people of good will can find common ground. We commend Sens. McCain and Kennedy for getting the ball rolling.

PORTLAND PRESS HERALD (ME): GOP senators pledge to deal with immigration 10/31

Monday, October 31, 2005

EDITORIAL: Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc.

The long debate over how to handle immigration may be reaching a point of compromise. A number of Republican senators who have submitted competing bills on the issue said this week they are joining forces on a single, yet-to-be finalized proposal.

Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and John Cornyn, R-Texas, stood alongside Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., to outline a graduated approach starting early next year.

They said they would work together to draft legislation that emphasizes border security, but also tackles the difficult issue of dealing with illegal immigrants who are already here.

Cornyn and Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., have written a bill that puts stresses enforcement and requires illegal aliens to return to their home countries to apply for a guest worker program. It does not offer a route to citizenship.

McCain and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., have a bill allows immigrants to stay for up to six years and provides a way for those who meet specific criteria to apply for permanent resident status.

This week, McCain and Cornyn emphasized that the goal remained an across-the-board overhaul.

That's what is needed, as the current system is not only broken, but shattered. When it comes to enforcement, it's fine to boost border patrols and controls, but they can never be leakproof. People come north for one reason, and that is because they can find work here that is unavailable at home.

Unless and until there is a serious enforcement action directed at the Americans who employ them - one with strong penalties - that motivation will not go away.

Something else that isn't going away is the estimated 10 million workers who have come to the United States illegally. Those who believe the country has to find some way to legalize their status and eventually make them citizens have the better argument.

That's the case first because the impact on the economy by their loss would be enormous, and second because finding and deporting them would be a near-impossible task. Without an incentive to stop evading the law, they have little or no reason to either come forward or leave.

Dealing with them, and controlling new immigration, is the task now before Congress and the Bush administration. It's good that it finally looks like they are taking it seriously.

THE POST & COURIER (Charleston, SC): Speed up immigration reform 08/26

August 26, 2005

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has responded to the states of emergency declared along their borders with Mexico by the governors of Arizona and New Mexico with common sense. He recognizes that more resources are needed to secure the nation's border, but knows that more agents and more federal dollars will not be enough. A comprehensive overhaul of border security and immigration policies is needed if there is going to be any long-term solution.

Mr. Chertoff said that he could sympathize with the need for more resources in border states where, "They have drug gangs. They have smuggling gangs," who are often armed and have been known to attack U.S. border agents. "It's not only a strain on the border communities where there's crime but it's a larger strain on all our communities having to deal with the burden of illegal immigration," he said in remarks reported by The Associated Press. "But we need to have a comprehensive solution."

It is encouraging that Mr. Chertoff has put the weight of the huge Homeland Security apparatus behind a many-pronged approach to the problems caused by massive illegal immigration.

He spoke specifically of the need for a temporary worker program, improved interior enforcement and greater federal-state planning and coordination.

As Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn, the chairman of the Senate immigration subcommittee, noted in remarks reported by the Dallas Morning News, the declarations of states of emergency in Arizona and New Mexico and the recent clashes and confrontations on the border have focused attention on illegal immigration and may help to speed the pace of reform. "There just seems to be a growing sense of momentum," Cornyn said, adding he is "pretty optimistic" that Congress will tackle a comprehensive border security and immigration overhaul package this fall.

President Bush has set the ground plan for meaningful reform centered around a temporary worker program. That outline has been fleshed out by GOP Sen. John McCain of Arizona and Democratic Sen. Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts, who are working with a bipartisan group of senators. Sens. Cornyn and Jon Kyl of Arizona, both Republicans, propose a tougher approach, requiring illegal immigrants to exit the country before applying to work legally. Under the McCain-Kennedy bill, undocumented workers could earn the right to stay by paying fines and back taxes, learning English and studying civics.

Members of Congress should work together to achieve a consensus on a new Immigration Bill that will end a situation that is too much like the old joke about the weather: Everyone complains, but no one does anything about it. Unlike the weather, which defies human intervention, immigration reform is not only possible, but a matter of urgency.

RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER (NC): Border blues 05/31

North Carolina looks to Congress for comprehensive repair work on the country's broken-down immigration system
May 31, 2005

The U.S. economy's magnetic force is guaranteed to attract poor people across the southern border. Without a legal channel for those willing to endure hardships for a better life, some are bound to come illegally and, for years, many have. Few summers pass without news of border violators dying en masse in America's southwest deserts.

Lately, the effects of the immigration system's failures are being felt in the lush Carolina Piedmont as well. Added to the usual stories of illegal immigrants who have been reduced to living in awful conditions are those of schools, hospitals and courts now being overwhelmed by 300,000 non-English speakers.

All the state can do is tinker around the edges of this problem, as long as Congress chooses to do little more than that. The public's resulting disenchantment with the rule of law has become palpable.

For all those reasons it is heartening to see a bipartisan team -- led by Sen. John McCain, Reps. Jeff Flake and Jim Kolbe, all Arizona Republicans, and Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy and Illinois Rep. Luis Gutierrez, both Democrats -- now back meaningful legislation. A rigorous debate of this bill's sweeping provisions would help strengthen it for passage.

The force with us

Introduced in both houses of Congress on May 12, the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act builds on President Bush's call for a new guest worker program that would match employers with willing workers. America would offer foreign nationals a new H-5A visa to enter the country for low-skill jobs that U.S. workers don't want.

The bill's initial cap of 400,000 visas seems meager, but at least the program recognizes the economic forces that have caused 11 million people to risk entering the U.S. illegally. Without this shadow workforce, many construction firms, farmers and parents who need child care would be among those left in the lurch, and the prices of homes, food and day care would zoom.

Under the bill, employers could sponsor visa holders for the work permits known as green cards or those people could apply on their own.

But visa holders who weren't in line for green cards within six years would have to return to their homeland. In surveys, many illegal immigrants say they want to return home with money in their pockets. Wisely, the legislation calls for a group to examine how well the program is working and to suggest ways to improve it.

Foreigners without papers would have a chance to register for a six-year visa, a provision denounced by some as amnesty for scofflaws. But that criticism hardly seems fair when U.S. employers are recruiting workers in Mexican towns, and when the Mexican government is issuing guidebooks to successful border crossings.

Besides, those workers would have to pay $2,000 in fines and back taxes, and meet other requirements in order to qualify for permanent status. As punishment for violating the law, that ought to suffice. And it's

important to note that this bill penalizes employers who flout immigration laws to take advantage of those desperate for work.

Coming attractions

It's not all about poor workers, however. The bill's authors recognize the real concern that a porous border poses in an age of terrorism. The Border Patrol recently estimated that 75,000 arrests along the Mexican border last year involved nationals of Syria, Iran and other countries with ties to terrorist groups. Among the legislation's promising solutions are technologies that make immigration documents tougher to counterfeit.

The bill also asks the secretary of state to negotiate U.S. participation in the screening of foreigners who use transit through Mexico to enter this country. In return, Mexico could gain U.S. technical support to strengthen control of the border.

Along the same lines, foreign governments would be asked to enter migration agreements encouraging people who come to the United States for jobs to return home. Part of this "circular migration" effort would be a sensible promotion of economic opportunity abroad.

By addressing the need for unskilled labor in America and the need for jobs in poor countries, this legislation stands a chance of relieving the overwhelming pressure on Border Patrol agents. There could never be enough of them to keep out people with hungry families so that agents can focus on would-be terrorists. Neither could America reasonably deport the desperate millions who came without the required documents.

It's equally tough to imagine how one state alone could afford, indefinitely, to provide schooling, health care and other human services for a population snowballing out of control. Like many other states in that position, North Carolina needs the whole menu of remedies offered by this bipartisan bill.

REGISTER-GUARD (Eugene, OR): Make immigration work 09/28

A Register-Guard Editorial
Published: Wednesday, September 28, 2005

A new study provides evidence that America's immigration system remains as dysfunctional and ineffective as it is unfair and unsafe.

A report released Tuesday by the Pew Hispanic Center says the number of illegal immigrants entering the United States actually surpassed the number of authorized immigrants during the past five years.

Think about that for a moment. At a time when this country has spent billions of dollars trying to create impermeable borders - and when the Bush administration has made homeland security a top priority - U.S. immigration policies are functioning like a broken fire hydrant.

More than 34 million immigrants now live in the United States. Nearly a third are undocumented immigrants whose hard labor keeps this nation's farms, nurseries, restaurants, hotels, construction sites and other workplaces supplied with a ready source of inexpensive labor.

Although many U.S. businesses could not function without them, these immigrants must risk everything to come to this country. They cross deadly wastelands and risk being locked in freight cars or sealed in cargo containers in the desperate hope that they will make it to this country alive.

Those who survive the journey are forced to live deep in the shadows for fear they will be deported. In many communities, they are resented and viewed with unwarranted suspicion. They are accused of taking jobs from U.S. citizens, even though most of those jobs otherwise would go unfilled. They are accused - wrongly - of not paying taxes and of devouring government services to which they're not entitled.

This country desperately needs a new immigration policy, one that does more than build walls and post armed guards along our borders. Congress and the White House must stop putting off the tough job of comprehensive immigration reform.

A bipartisan bill sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., provides an excellent starting point. Called the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, the heart of the bill is a new temporary visa program that would allow foreign workers to take jobs that would otherwise go unfilled. Undocumented immigrants already here in the United States would be eligible to apply for six-year visas and to apply for permanent immigration status - provided they clear security checks, and pay back taxes and $2,000 fines.

Some will howl that the bill provides amnesty. But that's a distortion. It requires acknowledgment of wrongdoing and prescribes a clear, substantial course of remedial action. Critics should also ask themselves what incentive illegal immigrants would have to emerge from the shadows without the powerful lure of legal status, perhaps even citizenship.

Since his election in 2000, Bush has repeatedly promised to lead the fight for immigration reform. With less than three years left in the White House, it's time for him to deliver on that promise and to work with Congress to create a fairer, safer, more effective and humane immigration system.

THE REPUBLICAN (Springfield, MA): Immigration changes seek real-world fixes 05/16

Monday, May 16, 2005

There are as many as 12 million people in this country illegally.

That has got to be the starting point for any rational debate about changes to the nation's immigration laws.

Thankfully, a bill co-sponsored by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., is eminently pragmatic. The proposed measure recognizes that changes have got to be made. And it suggests those changes in ways that are practical and attainable in the real world.

If, that is, Congress can get a bill passed and into the president's hands.

For his part, President Bush has broadly outlined what types of changes in immigration law he would like to see. The bill that Kennedy and his co-sponsor, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., have proposed would almost certainly pass muster with the White House. It's in the House of Representatives where the matter could face an uphill battle. But that's a fight for the future.

For now, the Kennedy-McCain measure deserves to be lauded as a significant step forward. It would provide a path for undocumented workers who are currently here to become legal, but it would not reward them for having sneaked into the United States. They would not go to the front of the line just because they are already here. And they would have to pay a fine for having broken immigration laws.

Residents of other nations who want to work here - and who can demonstrate that there will be a job waiting for them when they arrive - would be given a three-year visa. They'd also be able to legally return home and then come back into the United States while that visa was in force. Additionally, they would be able to apply for an extension and get on a track toward permanent residence.

As things stand now, people are risking their lives and ignoring the law, moving stealthily back and forth from their homelands to the United States. Others are living and working here but remain nearly completely beneath the radar.

The proposed bill recognizes those facts. And seeks to deal with them, equitably and reasonably. Opponents will doubtless use scare tactics to try to discredit the measure, but they'll be talking about a most unreal world, a place of their own imaginings.

Those who prefer the real world - and real solutions - have a good place to start.

THE REPUBLICAN (Springfield, MA): Immigration reform must admit realities 08/01

Monday, August 01, 2005

The meeting had been long in coming and was highly anticipated.

The Senate Judiciary Committee had scheduled a meeting for Tuesday to discuss illegal immigration. It was the first such meeting scheduled by the full committee since May 2002. Several competing plans were on the agenda. Lobbyists packed the room.

But no one from the White House bothered to show. Both Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao had been scheduled to appear at the meeting. But they didn't. And they failed, too, to send surrogates or even to provide written statements to the committee.

It would seem that immigration is not exactly at the top of the administration's to-do list. Immigration may not even appear at all on the White House agenda at present.

There are competing immigration plans in the Senate. One, sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., seeks to find a pragmatic solution to the situation at hand. Another proposal, from Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., seems bound more by ideology than by reality, proposing a punitive approach that would be unlikely to take hold in the real world. A third plan put forth by a farming group would deal with illegal farm workers separately from other illegal immigrants.

The White House can support one or another of those plans. Or it can back another proposal entirely. Or it can come up with its own way of dealing with illegal immigration. But what the White House cannot reasonably do is nothing at all. And that's exactly what it did on Tuesday by failing to attend the Judiciary Committee meeting.

It is reasonable to assume that the White House's political team does not see immigration as a winning issue. While President Bush will not again be running, every member of the House of Representatives and one-third of the senators will have to stand for re-election next year.

By most estimates, there are some 11 million illegal immigrants in the United States. At the same time, there has been greater concern about the porousness of our borders, especially in the post-9/11 world. One cannot realistically deal with the latter if one does not first acknowledge the former.

THE REPUBLICAN (Springfield, MA): Immigration reform should get green light 09/12

Monday, September 12, 2005

This is a nation of immigrants.

Decades ago, when paper and linen mills lined the banks of the Connecticut River in Holyoke, the city was a land of opportunity for immigrants.

Many Irish and Italian immigrants pursued the American dream in Springfield, and it is no coincidence that today it is known as the City of Homes.

Yet history also shows anti-immigrant sentiment in Western Massachusetts in those days, demonstrated by such unwelcome signs as "No Irish Need Apply" outside some businesses.

The anti-immigrant sentiment still exists today, as a five-part series that concluded in this newspaper Thursday showed.

We learned of a Guatemalan family that fled violence and poverty at home to risk deportation while living and working in Western Massachusetts. They and others live each day with a rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiment.

We also read a story about an illegal boarding house in Holyoke that was home to immigrants living in rooms with as many as six cots.

They come here now, as they did then, for better opportunities.

Today there are an estimated 11 million immigrants who entered this country illegally.

There is no doubt the nation's capacity to house immigrants is not limitless. Yet, when Congress sits down this fall to discuss the long delayed reform of immigration laws, it must begin its debate by recognizing that immigrants built this nation.

There must be some middle ground that protects the nation's security, reflects the nation's values and recognizes the contributions of immigrants to the nation's economy.

Sens. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass. and John McCain, R-Ariz., co-sponsor a bill that is essentially an amnesty program for the millions of immigrants who came here illegally, but have remained to work and raise their families.

Another bill, this one by Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., boosts funding for border patrols, but the proposed legislation is essentially punitive because its sponsors believe illegal immigrants should not be rewarded with amnesty.

All sides agree on one thing: the nation's immigration laws don't work.

It's time to fix that.

ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE (NY): Hope for reform 05/23

A new bipartisan immigration reform plan is worthwhile

May 23, 2005

With the exception of a few lines in this year's *State of the Union* speech and the rollout of his immigration reform plan prior to startup of the 2004 presidential campaign, there have been few signs that wrestling with the problem of undocumented workers is on President Bush's short list.

For the nation's sake, that should change now that Republican Sen. John McCain and Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy have stepped forward with a sensible compromise on immigration reform. Bush should get behind the bipartisan proposal, which already has backing from a coalition of immigrant advocacy groups as well as business and labor organizations.

And if there ever was a reminder of the urgent need to act, just look at the recent racial firestorm ignited by Mexico President Vicente Fox's in protest of American immigration policies. He said Mexicans in the United States work in jobs that "not even blacks" want. Not only is that comment a slap in the faces of African-Americans, but also it underscores the risk of worsening racial strife if the nation's illegal immigration problems aren't resolved.

One of the biggest concerns addressed by the McCain-Kennedy proposal is the nation's 10 million existing undocumented workers. They wouldn't be granted amnesty, as many hard-line Republicans prefer. Rather, they would have to pay a $2,000 fine and back taxes to get a temporary visa after undergoing rigorous security checks.

Those are reasonable requirements and a far cry from blanket amnesty, which would cause resentment among American workers hard-pressed to take care of their families. For one thing, the compromise allows the hiring of foreign workers with temporary visas only after employers prove their inability to hire Americans for the same job.

The White House told this page last week that despite the efforts of McClain and Kennedy, Bush still might not budge. The magnitude of the immigration problem, which has serious implications for national security, should compel at least a serious review. That done, surely Bush will recognize the opportunity to create fairer policies for all workers in America and at the same time make the country safer.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS (Denver, CO): No way to handle immigration 10/07
Congress can't duck this issue forever
October 7, 2005

In one corner we have three pistol-packing Colorado lawmakers who toured the U.S.-Mexican border this week, hobnobbing with members of the Minutemen Project and suggesting that Colorado somehow owed assistance to border states in order to control the influx.

In the other corner we have those whose first instinct in debating immigration issues is to denounce their opponents as a pack of racists. "Their actions and words are hateful and inhumane," declared the president of the Denver Area Labor Federation of the trio of lawmakers.

Yes, the news stories recounting a trip to the border by Reps. David Schul- theis, R-Colorado Springs; Bill Crane, R-Arvada; and Jim Welker, R-Loveland, and the reaction here in Colorado, tend to highlight the two extremes of the immigration debate. But the stories also underscore why Congress needs to get off the dime and address the issue of illegal immigration: Even Americans who dispute what should be done usually agree that the present system is dysfunctional.

Our own thinking on this issue is grounded in several premises.

• The thought of rounding up millions of hard-working illegals and sending them home is repulsive. Such a crackdown would also be economically disruptive and those advocating it are damaging the anti-immigration cause. Not all illegal immigrants work, of course; a few are indeed the parasites of anti-immigration lore, preying on the fringes of society. But most came here for honest labor.

• Our southern border is a sieve, and that's a scandal. No, it can't be sealed as tightly as, say, the Soviet Union once sealed its borders. But there is no excuse for policies that in some cases merely go through the motions of deterrence.

For example, tens of thousands of non-Mexicans who cross the border and are caught by immigration agents are given citations to appear in court and immediately released. This is an absurd practice - an invitation to wholesale migration from countries such as Brazil.

• Illegal immigrants who break the law should be deported, not released back into the community. Local police and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency have been derelict on this vital crime front.

• To maximize immigrants' contributions to our economy, Congress should hike the number of H-1B visas for foreign workers with special (often highly technical) skills. And it should create a guest worker program that allows employers to fill the many jobs for which they now have a hard time finding qualified or willing American applicants.

Details of a guest worker program would of course have to be worked out. For example, should multi-year work permits be renewable? (Yes, in our opinion.) Should permit holders jump to the head of the line for green cards? (Not in our view.) But such matters can be settled through negotiation.

No one doubts that any serious effort to reform immigration laws will provoke a bitter congressional debate.

But Congress has successfully tackled equally difficult issues - welfare reform in the 1990s, for example. For too long it has simply closed its eyes and ignored the growing clamor for action. So long as that's the case, activists on the extremes will continue to dominate the headlines.

SACRAMENTO BEE (CA): Immigration unreality 10/21

Detain-and-deport plan won't work
Published 2:15 am PDT Friday, October 21, 2005

Legislation proposed by Rep. John Doolittle seeks to close a loophole in efforts to control this country's southern border: Tens of thousands of illegal border-crossers who, because they are not Mexican, are quickly taken to the border and turned over to Mexican authorities and cannot easily be sent back to their home countries.

While Doolittle has correctly identified the problem, his solution seems unrealistic, given the numbers involved - more than 100,000 last year alone - and the lack of detention space to hold them until their status is resolved. It's also a piecemeal approach to a much larger illegal immigration challenge.

Doolittle's bill would end the "catch-and-release" policy under which OTMs - "other than Mexicans" as immigration officials call them - are released and told to appear before an immigration judge on a certain date. But of the 130,000 or so OTMs - many of them from Honduras, El Salvador and Brazil - who got such notices last year, only 15 percent showed up. In theory that added about 110,000 to the estimated 11 million undocumented aliens in this country.

Doolittle wants to build more detention facilities to house non-Mexicans rather than trusting them to appear before an immigration judge. Federal authorities have less than 20,000 beds available, and the cost of building enough facilities could easily top $1 billion. Will Congress - and the White House - go along? And how long would construction take? One official who buys the idea is Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, who told Congress this week he favors returning "every single illegal entrant - no exceptions." Does that include the millions already here?

The impracticability of such a plan makes it clear that the solution to the illegal immigration problem, if there is one, lies in adjusting U.S. law and practice to reality. Part of that reality is that this country needs millions of workers to do low-level, low-paid jobs for which a "guest worker" program is a logical answer. Another part is that it would be both impossible and inhumane to try to round up and deport millions of people, many having worked here for years and raised families that include U.S. citizens.

A sensible, more comprehensive approach lies in bipartisan legislation by Sens. John McCain and Edward Kennedy. It would give illegal immigrants already here and with no criminal record a chance to earn legal status over time. But Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and others are pushing for an "enforcement first" policy to seal the border - almost surely an impossibility - but leave a worker program until later. Such a plan is no likelier to succeed than Doolittle's attempt to get Congress to approve, and pay for, a massive detain-and-deport program that would disrupt both the U.S. economy and the lives of countless foreign workers.

Note: This editorial also ran in the Fresno Bee on October 24, 2005

SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS (TX): Border a bad place for armed militias 08/23
Web Posted: 08/23/2005 12:00 AM CDT
San Antonio Express-News

Before Congress adjourned for its August recess, Rep. John Culberson, R-Houston, introduced a piece of legislation whose time has not come.

Culberson calls his bill the Border Protection Corps Act. It would allow border governors to deputize armed civilian militias to detain illegal immigrants. Forty-six co-sponsors, including Republican Reps. Lamar Smith and Henry Bonilla of San Antonio, have signed on to the measure.

The act takes a questionable effort, the Minuteman Project, and makes it undeniably bad. The Minutemen, to their credit, have an official policy only to observe border crossings and alert the Border Patrol. Culberson's bill authorizes armed militias "to use any means and any force authorized by state law to prevent individuals from unlawfully entering the United States."

Proponents of the measure might consider it in a different light if armed militias were empowered to seize undocumented day laborers and housekeepers from their places of employment.

No one is denying the severity of the immigration problem or the security crisis created by a porous border.

Despite decades of vast increases in agents and the budget of the Border Patrol and Customs Service, the United States is barely denting illegal immigration.

A comprehensive reform of U.S. border and immigration policies is needed. Congress will take up two Senate proposals when it returns next month.

Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., have introduced significant immigration bills that deserve serious debate.

The Border Protection Corps Act, on the other hand, is an appeal to populism that deserves to be rejected. It is a prescription not only for disaster but also for tragedy.

SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS (TX): Fed action overdue in immigration crisis 10/18

San Antonio Express-News
Web Posted: 10/18/2005 12:00 AM CDT

The federal government finally seems to be taking notice of the border security problem. It's about time.

Within the past week, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist accompanied Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas on a fact-finding mission to the Rio Grande Valley, the attorneys general of the United States and Mexico met in San Antonio to announce cross-border initiatives for border security and Congress passed a homeland security bill with $5.6 billion for border control.

There was a time when the White House and the Republican leadership in Congress could dismiss pleadings about a border crisis as the politically motivated complaints of Democratic governors in Arizona and New Mexico.

Last month, however, 24 of Texas' 32 House members — mostly Republicans, including Reps. Lamar Smith and Henry Bonilla of San Antonio — signed a letter to President Bush deploring the desperate situation along the 1,100-mile border the Lone Star State shares with Mexico.

Gov. Rick Perry last week also unveiled Operation Linebacker. It will direct $10 million in homeland security and anti-crime grants to border counties. While not going as far as his counterparts in New Mexico and Arizona in declaring states of emergency, Perry did ask the federal government to designate the Texas-Mexico border a "high threat" for terrorist activity.

A disturbing trend in illegal immigration has been the rapidly increasing number of undocumented immigrants from countries other than Mexico crossing into Texas. Most come from Brazil. But included among the apprehensions are individuals the government refers to as "special interest aliens" from countries linked to international terrorism.

The Texas Minutemen project is conducting a monthlong operation along the Texas-Mexico border. Bush has rightly characterized the Minutemen as vigilantes. At a press conference earlier this year, he criticized their efforts, saying, "I'm for enforcing the law in a rational way."

Events of the last week demonstrate the White House and Congress are finally getting rational about the border security problem.

Hiring 1,000 new Border Patrol agents, as the homeland security bill does, is just a start. The number of border agents has increased from 8,500 in 2000 to almost 10,000, today, yet the wave of undocumented immigrants continues.

If Bush and congressional leaders want to keep amateur vigilantes off the border, the federal government will have to reform an immigration system that both liberals and conservatives acknowledge is broken.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (CA): No Border Emergency Here 08/19

Friday, August 19, 2005

UNLIKE Democratic governors in Arizona and New Mexico, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger shouldn't even think about declaring a border emergency in California.

That's because there isn't one.

If there is any section of the 2,200-mile U.S.-Mexico border where the case could be made that our border policies are "working," it is in California.

The number of illegal immigrants crossing our southern border has dropped dramatically since the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper in 1995. A longer border fence, a huge increase in Border Patrol agents, surveillance equipment and border lights have all contributed to a drop in apprehensions from a high of 550,688 in 1996 to 154,826 since Oct. 1 last year.

These days, the California border is positively dull -- at least compared to a decade ago when the hillsides and canyons near San Ysidro were covered at night with the shadows of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of migrants trying to get into the state. One of the biggest challenges for immigration authorities is how to alleviate the boredom of Border Patrol agents.

Not surprisingly, there are no vigilante groups patrolling the California- Mexico border.

But the relative calm on our section of the border does not mean that the illegal-immigration problem, from a national perspective, has been "solved." All we've done is to export it to Arizona, where apprehensions of illegal immigrants have soared.

Unfortunately, Gov. Schwarzenegger is sending a mixed message on the border-emergency idea, as he has been doing for months on the illegal- immigration issue. This week, he praised the declaration of border emergencies in Arizona and New Mexico as a "terrific idea," at the same time conceding that conditions in California did not support imposing one. He said he would consider declaring an emergency if conditions changed here.

Regardless of what happens on the California border, declaring a state of emergency will do nothing to solve the problem of what to do about the 10.3 million illegal immigrants already here, as well as the estimated 485,000 new ones who settle here each year.

What is needed is a comprehensive solution to the problem -- like those embodied in the bipartisan legislation put forward by Sen. Edward Kennedy, D- Mass., and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. The legislation would grant temporary visas to guest workers, as well as provide a way for immigrants already here to gain legal status over time.

Instead of political grandstanding on an emotional issue with enormous economic implications for the state, Schwarzenegger should be using his clout in Washington to promote meaningful immigration reform. Endorsing the concept of a "border emergency" does little other than make headlines and inflame passions against immigrant workers.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE (CA): Bush's flawed immigration plan 10/02

Sunday, October 2, 2005

IF YOU NEEDED any proof that our immigration system is completely broken, take a look at a new report from the Pew Hispanic Center. It shows that for the first time in our nation's history the number of illegal immigrants coming to the United States exceeds the number of those coming in legally.

Yes, that's right. Despite the expenditure of at least $10 billion spent over the past decade to tighten controls on the Southwest border, some 562,000 unauthorized immigrants came into the United States in 2004. In contrast, 455,000 came here as legal permanent residents. (See www.pewhispanic.org for the full report.)

This state of affairs should be prompting a fundamental rethinking of our national immigration policies. Despite repeated signals that suggested it was willing to tackle the problem, the Bush administration now seems hopelessly deadlocked on the issue.

President Bush's emerging immigration plan, which the White House has been discussing with lawmakers and others in private meetings over the past couple of weeks, is an example of the fantasyland in which the administration continues to roam on this issue.

The Bush plan calls for establishing a guest-worker program. According to those who have seen it, the plan would allow illegal immigrants already here to sign up as guest workers, if they pay a stiff fine. They would be given a three-year visa, with a possibility of renewal for another three. After that, they would have to return to their home countries for at least a year before reapplying for entry to the United States.

Sound good? The fatal flaw in this proposal is that it is hard to imagine that any more than a tiny number of the 11 million or so illegal immigrants in the nation would sign up for the temporary visa. Why would they risk a life that many have established over many years -- often with continuous employment with the same employer -- knowing that they would have to return to their home country in three to six years?

In addition, the plan ignores the reality that most illegal immigrants live in families with "mixed" immigration status. As Jeffrey Passell, co-author of the Pew study, points out, an estimated 3.6 million legal-immigrant children in the United States have illegal-immigrant parents. It's highly unlikely that an unauthorized migrant would pack up with his legal family members and return to his or her country of origin after three to six years here as a guest worker.

What's more likely to happen is that a guest-worker program would attract foreign workers who are not yet in the country. What the United States, and every other country that has had a temporary guest-worker program, has found is that many participants end up staying permanently in the host country. The Bush plan could have the perverse effect of adding to the sizable illegal immigrant population already here.

Unless President Bush is willing to consider some path to permanent status for illegal immigrants already in the United States, his immigration plan will do little to reinforce what should be a fundamental principle in U.S. immigration policy -- that most immigrants come here legally. And illegal immigrants will continue to outnumber legal immigrants.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS (CA): Bipartisan bill deserves Bush's backing 05/19

FOR LEGISLATION BALANCING SECURITY, ECONOMIC NEEDS TO PASS, PRESIDENT MUST OPPOSE GOP HARD-LINERS

Mercury News Editorial
May 19, 2005

In his State of the Union address, President Bush called for immigration reform. Last week, Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona and Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts turned Bush's outline into a comprehensive bill. But the legislation will never see the light of day unless the president challenges the anti-immigration wing of the Republican Party to tamp down its rhetoric and compromise.

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 recognizes that a compromise on immigration must preserve economic opportunity for immigrants while protecting the nation's borders. The United States must replace the stealth and danger of border hopping with fair and consistent rule of law.

The bill would do this by creating three-year work visas that could be renewed once. Newcomers would be matched with specific jobs that first had been offered to Americans, and they would be given fraud-resistant IDs. Undocumented workers here now also would be given temporary visas.

Border surveillance would be increased; penalties against companies that ignored the new rules would be stiffened and enforced. Holders of temporary visas would be given the opportunity, in time, to seek a green card and, eventually, citizenship.

It is on this last point that the president and the bill's sponsors diverge. Bush has not proposed giving green cards to those who crossed illegally, although his press secretary said Bush has taken no position yet on the Kennedy-McCain bill. Anti-immigration Republicans, however, insist that ``amnesty'' for lawbreakers is out of the question.

Amnesty is not what McCain and Kennedy are proposing. Under their bill, undocumented workers would have to pay back taxes and a $2,000 fine to get a green card. They would not jump ahead in the immigration line. They would apply for temporary visas, like other foreign workers, agree to a background and security check, and have to prove a history of work.

New temporary work visas will not curb illegal immigration if they're limited to agricultural workers, as Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., favors.

And the system will fail unless the nation's 10 million existing undocumented workers participate in it. Workers won't step forward if they fear they'll face deportation after six years -- not that it would actually happen. It's implausible to imagine arresting and kicking out millions of families who have been here for years, paying taxes, with roots in the community and children in school.

The federal amnesty of 1986 failed to discourage illegal immigration or deter an underground economy because it lacked teeth. The Kennedy-McCain bill includes stiff employer penalties. It is pragmatic. That's why a surprising coalition of business and labor groups, immigrant-rights activists and economic libertarians support it. Bush should, too.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS (CA): A state of emergency for Democratic governors; Border Crisis Requires Visa Reforms, Enhanced Enforcement 08/23

August 23, 2005

Two Democratic governors have cranked up the volume of the debate over illegal immigration. At some point, even President Bush and congressional leaders with ear plugs will be forced to listen -- and do something.

Govs. Bill Richardson of New Mexico and Janet Napolitano of Arizona declared states of emergency in several counties bordering Mexico, freeing up money for border patrols, night-vision goggles and overtime pay they say is needed to stop illegal immigrants, drug smuggling and other crimes proliferating along the border.

The declarations were, in part, a partisan slap at the Bush administration, which the governors accused of failing to keep their borders safe and secure. Neither Texas Gov. Rick Perry nor California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, both Republicans, followed suit. However, Schwarzenegger was not quiet on the issue, saying he was sympathetic and might take similar action in the future.

But Richardson's and Napolitano's actions also reflect Democrats' realization that deep and growing divisions on immigration are cutting across party and ethnic lines. Both governors, who are facing re-election next year, understand that voters could just as easily blame them for the problems.

Immigration is a volatile issue, and tensions are building along border communities. Earlier this month, Tony Garza, the American ambassador to Mexico, closed the consulate in Nuevo Laredo, opposite Laredo, Texas, for a week after the assassination of the police chief and dozens of drug-related killings. On the American side, the Minutemen are stepping up efforts to recruit volunteers for border patrols.

There is a sensible solution: tighter borders in concert with a new visa program, both for Mexicans in Mexico and those already in America. They would be accompanied by penalties, enforced once and for all, against employers who violate the rules. A bipartisan bill sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., has taken such a balanced approach. Bush also has called for a temporary visa program, though without a possible path to citizenship for undocumented workers here now. But the closed-border wing of Republicans in Congress has thwarted any action, and the president hasn't tried to force the issue.

Still, Democrats who simply sit back and celebrate the Republican stalemate do so at their peril. Most voters favor curbs on illegal immigration. Even a third of Hispanics expressed the view that there already were too many immigrants in America, and steps should be taken to prevent others from entering, according to a recent survey by a Democratic Party pollster.

Richardson, a Latino with possible presidential ambitions, favors liberal immigration policies. But the Minutemen themselves could have written his state-of-emergency declaration.

He and Napolitano know that voters will hold one or the other party responsible for inaction or indifference.

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER (WA): International Border: Focus on policy 08/23

Tuesday, August 23, 2005

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER EDITORIAL BOARD

Focus on the prevention of terrorism has telescoped the government's attention on Canada's "soft border," while our border with Mexico remains a war zone for drug lords and human smugglers.

While the Bush administration finally has admitted that it needs to revise its immigration plan (to which we say: We have an immigration plan? Really?), we hope it'll keep a few things in mind.

First, that adopting a hard-line, anti-immigration policy in this case would be a mistake. Although Democratic Govs. Bill Richardson (N.M.) and Janet Napolitano (Ariz.) hope that building a 377-mile fence at the border would help with what they call an emergency in their states, we wonder how effective those measures would be.

A recent poll by the Pew Hispanic Center indicated that 46 percent of adults there would immigrate here, legally or illegally. And it's not just the poor and uneducated masses that wish to do so -- the poll also found that 35 percent of college-educated Mexicans want to move here. According to The Wall Street Journal, we have nearly as many illegal immigrants living in the United States as legal ones (10.3 million versus 10.4 million).

Trying to keep everyone out of this country is a losing battle. We' d be better off having a real immigration policy, one that lets in people who have a lot to offer us rather than force them to either live under a corrupt government or deal with illegal, life-threatening border crossings.

They deserve a better option, and we're in a position to give them one.

SEATTLE TIMES (WA): Reforms now, from border to orchard 09/18

Sunday, September 18, 2005 - 12:00 AM

U.S. immigration policy is untenable. The promised once-and-for-all reform of 1986, which granted certain undocumented workers amnesty and vowed stricter enforcement, was a dismal failure.

President George W. Bush 19 months ago proposed immigration reform that would permit workers to apply for legal residency — but with no path to citizenship. His announcement actually spurred an increase in illegal entry by immigrants hoping to get in before the reforms were enacted. But nothing happened. Though the president recently promised Arizonans he would work with their governor to secure the border with Mexico, his administration has all but abdicated leadership on the issue. Two administration officials last month canceled testimony before a Senate hearing on two competing immigration proposals.

In the meantime, citizens are patrolling the border, and the governors of Arizona and New Mexico — both Democrats — declared emergencies to free more money to deal with the effects of extensive illegal border crossings.

So far, two ideas in the U.S. Senate seem to be gaining traction. Though they conflict in fundamental ways, a meshing of both would be the best solution.

• Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., proposed the most pragmatic approach to dealing with immigrants already here without legal permission — believed to be as many as 15 million, mostly from Mexico and other Latin American countries.

They propose to permit those workers to pay up to a $2,000 fine and apply for a work visa, but they have to get in line behind others who migrated legally for a chance at citizenship.

• Republican Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Jon Kyl of Arizona proposed a bill that also would permit guest workers. But it would give visas only to those applying outside the United States. People here illegally would have to return home.

McCain's bill is more practical because it permits immigrants with jobs to legalize their status. The logistical acrobatics required by Cornyn's bill could encourage immigrants to stay hidden.

But Cornyn's bill provides enforcement teeth McCain's does not, including electronic-identification cards for guest workers, improved border-security technology and 10,000 more federal agents enforcing immigration laws at the border and at work sites nationwide.

President Bush, a former governor of a border state, must reassert himself in this issue, which is pushing border states and destination states to the breaking point.

The lack of enforcement of immigration laws from the border to the orchard or restaurant is what has created this impossible situation. The solution requires two things: taking responsibility for U.S. complicity in permitting industries to rely on cheaper undocumented migrant labor, and adamantly resolving that enforcement will be widespread and have teeth.

SIERRA VISTA HERALD (AZ): Reagan's words repeated 05/16
Tuesday, May 17, 2005
Last modified Monday, May 16, 2005 1:19 PM MDT

Nearly 20 years ago, President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

The purpose: To require employers to vouch for the legal status of their workers, to enforce those sanctions so illegal immigrants wouldn't have the workplaces to come to and to allow amnesty to all undocumented workers who arrived in the United States prior to 1982.

It's a proposal that Reagan worked with Congress on for about five years. It's one that seemed reasonable at the time.

Reagan's legislation is similar to some guest-worker proposals now.

Last week, several U.S. lawmakers, including U.S. Rep. Jim Kolbe and U.S. Sen. John McCain, both Republicans from Arizona, unveiled a piece of legislation that would allow illegal foreign workers a chance to apply for a visa and to have a path toward legal permanent residency - at a price. It also would work to enforce sanctions on businesses that hire illegal immigrants.

The proposal aims to control illegal immigration by making some of the foreign workers legitimate. It's a proposal that's been called "amnesty," a politically dirty word. The supporters say it isn't amnesty, but a way to solve a problem that our nation faces.

And it would create documentation that, according to its supporters, would be easier for employers to track the legal status of a worker.

Some also say it would bring illegal immigrants out of the shadows and into the light of the real America.

It's the same way Reagan described the 1986 act when he was signing it.

"The legalization provisions in this act will go far to improve the lives of a class of individuals who now must hide in the shadows, without access to many of the benefits of a free and open society," he said.

It is interesting to compare today's proposed legislation with the act Reagan signed.

Both are geared toward denying a workplace for illegal immigrants. Both are working to secure the nation through sanctions and a path to becoming an American. Both are ideas to regain control of the borders.

If there are any lessons from 1986, it's that allowing a certain number of undocumented workers didn't work. More came and still come to America. The proposal is different now, but would it stop the flow of illegal immigrants and increase the flow of those who would enter the nation legally?

The 1986 act also showed that it isn't easy to enforce sanctions on businesses. We wait to hear in more detail how the new proposal would be enforced by the government.

Reagan made his point for the 1986 act eloquently, as the man known as the "great communicator" should.

"Our objective is only to establish a reasonable, fair, orderly, and secure system of immigration into this country and not to discriminate in any way against particular nations or people," Reagan said when signing the

act.

"The act I am signing today is the product of one of the longest and most difficult legislative undertakings of recent memory. It has truly been a bipartisan effort, with this administration and the allies of immigration reform in the Congress, of both parties, working together to accomplish these critically important reforms. Future generations of Americans will be thankful for our efforts to humanely regain control of our borders and thereby preserve the value of one of the most sacred possessions of our people: American citizenship."

Unfortunately, what Reagan strived for then is still being strived for now. And just like then, it will be a difficult legislative undertaking.

TO READ Reagan's speech on the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, log onto http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/110686b.htm

SIERRA VISTA (AZ) HERALD: Disaster may derail reform 09/06

Wednesday, September 7, 2005
Last modified Tuesday, September 6, 2005 1:48 PM MDT

On Friday, The Associated Press reported a record 415 people have died trying to cross the border illegally from Mexico in the past 11 months.

And it's likely that number will go higher before Sept. 30, the final day of the federal government's fiscal year. On Oct. 1, the government cleans its calendar and gears up for another year.

The number wasn't surprising to most Cochise County residents, who have endured the constant impacts - garbage, crime and humanitarian issues.

The Border Patrol said the rise in deaths came because illegal immigrants and their smugglers have moved their efforts to a more mountainous and treacherous stretch of desert east of the Baboquivari Mountains and the Tohono O'odham Indian reservation, according to an article by AP reporter Arthur H. Rotstein, who covers Southern Arizona.

Unprecedented heat, too, was named as a factor.

According to statistics compiled by Herald/Review senior reporter Bill Hess, Border Patrol stations in Cochise County haven't apprehended as many illegal immigrants, which may give credence to the fact that smugglers and potential illegal immigrants are looking for another way in.

We continue to hold out hopes that illegal immigration will be a major discussion point as Congress heads back into session. With at least two ideas proposed - one supported by Sen. John McCain and Rep. Jim Kolbe, both R-Ariz., and another by Sen. Jon Kyl - we believe it's a starting point for the discussion.

However - just as in 2001, when Arizonans saw a possibility that the border issues would be addressed be overshadowed by the terrible attacks on Sept. 11 - a disaster may get in the way of the government seriously moving such reform forward. Hurricane Katrina's aftermath will likely be coming first and foremost.

We urge congressmen from throughout the nation not to forget the importance of resolving border and immigration issues. Reform is necessary. A healthy national debate is necessary.

With the border issue comes along the effort to make our border with Mexico more secure. In light of less-than-stellar reaction to the hurricane destruction, we believe border security is more important than ever. We don't need potential terrorists continuing to see an open door along the border.

And we don't need to continue to have people dying in the desert because they want a better life.

The president, as well as congressmen from the Southwest and Arizona, need to keep immigration on the forefront. They need to discuss it. They need to see what they people think. They shouldn't hold off, even in light of Katrina's devastation.

THE TENNESSEAN (Nashville, TN): An immigration bill that is humane, workable 05/24
Tuesday, 05/24/05

Kudos to Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., for crafting real, workable legislation on immigration.

Their bill would allow as many as 400,000 workers a year to come into this country if they have jobs already lined up. They would be issued three-year worker visas that could be renewed for a fourth year; after that, they could apply for green cards.

The businesses that hire them would have to prove they are unable to hire Americans for the same jobs. The documented workers would be issued tamper-proof identification cards.

Workers who are already in the U.S. illegally would face much steeper obstacles. They would have to pay a $2,000 fine and back taxes, register for the military, prove they are learning English and then, only after six years, could they apply for a green card.

All people seeking guest workers status, both foreign nationals and illegal workers, would have to pass police background checks and medical exams. They would be issued visas that allow them to visit their homeland. Employers who hire illegal workers would face heavier penalties.

Only a comprehensive approach on immigration will work. The McCain-Kennedy bill addresses concerns about national security, enforcement, costs to states with high immigrant populations and employment needs.

Some lawmakers believe the bill falls short by not authorizing money to strengthen border patrols. Some will take issue with any proposal that lets workers who are now here illegally to be allowed to stay. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., opposes the sweeping approach on the McCain-Kennedy bill, saying she will propose a far more limited bill that offers legalization only to agricultural workers.

But at least McCain and Kennedy have put a bill on the table that is practical and humane. The status quo — an undocumented population of 11 million that grows by 500,000 each year — is neither. The McCain-Kennedy bill needs to be the focal point for a long overdue immigration effort in Congress.

EL TIEMPO LATINO (DC, MD, VA): Proyecto para un país seguro 05/20

Washington, D.C., 20 de mayo del 2005

Pespués de la vergonza ley "Real ID" -vergonzosa por la manera en que se maniobró su navegación en el Congreso, por la peligrosa inclusión del factor inmigrante en la ecuación del terrorismo y por la firma silenciosa del presidente Bush- nos llega ahora una iniciativa bipartidista: los senadores John McCain (R-AZ) y Edward Kennedy (D-MA), y los representantes Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), Jeff Flake (R-AZ) y Luis Gutiérrez (D-IL) acaban de proponer el proyecto de ley para un País Seguro y una Inmigración Ordenada (Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act).

Reconocer oficialmente que el sistema de inmigración no funciona y evitar el acoso y derribo del indocumentado, o hacer de éste la víctima fácil y el culpable único, es siempre saludable.

El proyecto de ley refleja, como ha señalado la Asociación Nacional de Abogados de Inmigración, que el gobierno federal debe dar la talla y reformar nuestras actuales leyes de inmigración; que este país no puede tener seguridad fronteriza a menos que emprenda dicha reforma; que arreglar nuestro sistema de inmigración para que sea seguro, legal y ordenado aumentará nuestra seguridad; que necesitamos un sistema de inmigración controlado que sustituya la entrada ilegal por un flujo legal de inmigrantes; y, finalmente, que necesitamos un sistema de inmigración compatible con los valores fundamentales estadounidenses de la justicia y la igualdad ante la ley.

Apoyar una reforma que mejore nuestra seguridad como país y ayude a la reunificación familiar es lo que parece haber estado predicando durante largo tiempo el presidente Bush, para luego contradecirse al firmar casi con nocturnidad el "Real ID".

Pero todavía hay esperanzas de que este presidente se libre de las redes miopes o simplemente xenófobas y antiestadounidenses de buena parte de su partido, para alinearse con quienes buscan otorgar a millones de indocumentados en este país la condición de seres humanos.

Para ello se necesitan dos partidos y un líder.

-Alberto Avendaño

EL TIEMPO LATINO (DC, MD, VA): Pass the Kennedy-McCain Bill 09/23

Washington, D.C., 23 de septiembre del 2005

Esta semana, una reunión comunitaria y del activismo latino en una iglesia de D.C. sirvió para el lanzamiento de una movilización nacional a favor de la reforma migratoria que simboliza hoy la propuesta de ley que recibe el nombre en español, de "País Seguro e Inmigración Ordenada". Al evento del martes acudió el senador John McCain, el republicano de Arizona y copatrocinador de una iniciativa que lo distancia hasta el divorcio con otras propuestas migratorias emanadas de su partido.

El 12 de mayo pasado se presentó lo que se conoce como "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act 2005", patrocinada por McCain (R-AZ) y Kennedy (D-MA) y los legisladores Kolbe (R-AZ), Flake (R-AZ) y Gutiérrez (D-IL). Popularmente la iniciativa se conoce como el proyecto Kennedy-McCain o McCain-Kennedy, obviamente dado el peso y prestigio de estas dos figuras de la política nacional. Pero más allá del "star system" que ambos representan se deben enfatizar los parámetros ideológicos y humanistas que impulsan este proyecto de ley: la necesidad de mantener una estructura fronteriza donde prime la seguridad, el reconocimiento de las contribuciones de los inmigrantes y lo imperioso que resulta que las políticas migratorias reflejen nuestras propias raíces inmigrantes. Además, una inequívoca intención de resolver los problemas migratorios de la nación por medio de la creación de canales adecuados para la inmigración legal lo cual, sin duda, servirá los intereses nacionales a nivel económico, social y de seguridad.

El énfasis en la seguridad fronteriza del proyecto de ley, lejos de implicar elementos represivos o de militarización, identifica y responde a las vulnerabilidades de seguridad en los puertos de entrada del país. Es impensable un cuadro de legislación migratoria efectiva sin un marco fronterizo que sepa combinar seguridad con humanismo. La seguridad tiene que ver con los recursos humanos y tecnológicos, el humanismo con el trato no hostil del inmigrante.

Un aspecto importante del proyecto de ley -en estos tiempos de amenazas, ataques y desastres naturales- es la búsqueda de la coordinación de las autoridades a nivel federal, local y estatal -incluso a nivel tribal.

El reconocimiento del fenómeno migratorio como un hecho transnacional se refleja en la propuesta de colaboración con México y Centroamérica para combatir las mafias del tráfico ilegal de seres humanos - contemplando visas para las víctimas.

Asimismo se proponen acuerdos con gobiernos extranjeros para establecer patrones migratorios circulares y controlables.

El concepto del "trabajador esencial" reconoce al inmigrante temporal e incluye al matrimonio y los hijos -la permanencia inicial es de tres años, otorga al trabajador la capacidad de cambiar de empleo y la misma protección laboral que un trabajador estadounidense.

De especial importancia para millones de indocumentados es la posibilidad de ajuste migratorio que asegura el reconocimiento del trabajador y su familia por 6 años y que podría conducir a la residencia permanente - aunque no lo garantiza.

La propuesta es un paso en la dirección correcta.
-Alberto Avendaño

THE TIMES OF TRENTON (NJ): Realism on immigration 05/21

Saturday, May 21, 2005

One of the toughest problems facing the United States is how to deal with the illegal immigrants who have streamed across its porous borders for decades. What is needed is a combination of compassion, realism, concern for the nation's security, respect for the integrity of its laws, and fairness to those who have abided by those laws. No solution devised by humans will blend those imperatives in perfect proportion. But it's the job of the nation's lawmakers to do their best.

A bipartisan group in Congress has taken that responsibility seriously. As columnist Roger Hernandez noted on this page yesterday, the "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act" has been introduced in the Senate and House by lawmakers driven by concerns that are both regional and national. The sponsors are three Arizona Republican legislators whose border state is on the front line of the illegal immigration from Mexico, Sen. John McCain and Reps. Jeff Flake and Jim Kolbe, along with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., and Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez, D-Ill. Their bill recognizes, as Hernandez wrote, that the 11 million illegal immigrants who live in the United States are not about to go away, that businesses need them to do jobs Americans will not do and that it is simply impossible, logistically and morally, to tear families apart with wholesale deportations.

The measure attempts to persuade would-be illegal immigrants to choose a better alternative. It increases the number of visas by up to 400,000 a year, but links their issuance to the availability of jobs Americans are unwilling to take. After an employer has advertised a position for two weeks without success, the job would be entered into a database accessible at U.S. consulates. Applicants who paid a $500 processing fee and passed a security check would receive a state-of-the-art, tamper-proof visa.

Illegals who already are here would pay back taxes plus fines of $2,000 or more, undergo a background check and receive visas good for six years, after which they would either have to return to their country of origin or apply for permanent residence - at the end of the immigration line. To become a legal resident, an illegal would have to have a job and show that he or she is learning English.

Despite the difficulty of the latter process and the hefty fines, the bill in effect establishes a form of amnesty - a politically toxic word from which its sponsors shrink. Nevertheless, they have come up with a pragmatic way to distinguish between undesirable aliens - not to mention terrorists - and hard-working people trying to make a better life for themselves and their families.

The bill is gaining support from business groups, unions and Hispanic organizations. It could and should be strengthened, as Hernandez pointed out, by the inclusion of additional funds for border patrols, an essential backstop to the practicality and compassion it embodies. President Bush, who has called for realism in the reform of the immigration laws, should join the bipartisan advocates in Congress in the task of improving the proposal and turning it into law.

TOLEDO BLADE (OH): Rare immigration accord 06/09

June 9, 2005

IMMIGRATION reform is an issue that liberals and conservatives have rarely agreed on. The common assumption is that conservatives want to limit who can come into this country because of their twin fears of terrorism and a loss of cultural hegemony.

Liberals are said to favor opening the spigots of our borders as wide as possible because they like the diversity that comes from more broad-based immigration.

A wider gulf cannot be imagined.

So when Sen. John McCain, the Arizona Republican, and Sen. Ted Kennedy, the Democrat from Massachusetts, recently joined forces on a bill to overhaul immigration, those at both ends of the political spectrum took notice - and applauded.

Their bill would upgrade border security and track immigrant workers and travelers while providing temporary work visas for unskilled laborers. It would also make it easier for legal immigrants to bring their families into the country while easing federal reimbursement to hospitals for emergency care of undocumented aliens.

In other words, the McCain-Kennedy immigration bill is a mixed bag for both sides. Still, it balances the interests of national security and legal immigrants sometimes caught in a netherworld of punitive laws.

Recently, an interfaith network of religious groups has taken up the banner of immigration reform. Reaching deep into the tradition of providing hospitality to strangers and wayfarers, they've settled upon the McCain-Kennedy bill as a reasonable place to begin.

In an era of partisan squabbling and perpetual bad blood, immigration reform is a worthy issue upon which people of good will can find common ground. We congratulate Sens. McCain and Kennedy for initiating the search.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): Best chance at reforming immigration 05/17

opinion@tucsoncitizen.com

TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2005

A bipartisan immigration reform bill introduced in both houses of Congress represents the best opportunity yet to achieve real, comprehensive immigration reform.

The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act has the support of two Senate heavyweights - John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass. In the House, it is supported by Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake, both Arizona Republicans, and Luis Gutierrez, D-Ill.

Previous immigration reform efforts have been doomed because they were undertaken by one party only. Other bills have tried to deal with only narrow aspects of the multifaceted immigration issue. This bill corrects both deficits and is an honest recognition of the problem.

There has been hope for immigration reform since President Bush said it is one of his major concerns. But Bush has been disappointingly slow to say what he is looking for, and nothing has happened.

Under the bill, people now in the United States illegally could come forward and apply for a work visa. Workers would have to pay a $1,000 fine and submit to background checks. Visas would be valid for up to six years.

At the same time, those workers and others not in the country could apply for green cards allowing them to remain in the United States and work permanently.

The bill works to toughen enforcement at the border and in the workplace.

At the border, there would be increased technology, anti-smuggling initiatives and other steps to reduce illegal immigration. And other countries - most notably, Mexico - would be encouraged to be partners by promoting more economic opportunities at home for their own citizens.

In the workplace, employers could check a potential employee's status electronically. Employers would be required to use the system, and there would be stiff fines for knowingly hiring someone in the country illegally.

There will be opposition from those who want illegal immigrants deported immediately and required to return home to obtain a visa. But that is impractical. The goal is to encourage illegal immigrants to come forward and be part of the system so we know who is in this country and can check their backgrounds.

If this bill is to have any hope of passage, it must be aggressively backed by Bush. His support has been tepid, with a spokesman saying only that the president "is glad to see this contribution to the discussion on immigration."

Bush should embrace this bill and work vigorously to obtain its passage. It is a major step in the right direction.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): D.C. dawdles as immigrants die in desert 05/27

Our Opinion:
Tucson Citizen
May 27, 2005

The 2005 "season of death" has begun right on schedule along the Arizona-Mexico border.

As the bodies of illegal immigrants are found in the parched desert, a substantive debate over immigration reform still has not begun. Comprehensive reform is the only way this annual slaughter can be stopped.

Members of Congress should be outraged or ashamed. Instead, they are blasé.

To those of us who live in southern Arizona, the headlines of late May are predictable: "Illegal immigrant death wave following desert's heat wave" the Tucson Citizen reported this week.

Within the past week, the bodies of at least 12 illegal immigrant suspects have been found in the Arizona desert during record-breaking heat. There likely are more bodies undiscovered.

The stories behind those bodies are heartbreaking: One person was only 15; a 24-year-old pregnant woman died as her husband desperately searched for help; a man who had sought shelter from the sun in an abandoned house died two weeks before his body was found.

Dozens more would have died without the rescue efforts of U.S. Border Patrol agents and volunteer humanitarians.

So what is being done to stop this carnage? Volunteers are putting water in the desert to help unsuspecting people who have no idea what they are getting into. The same volunteers are passing out maps at the border, warning immigrants of the heat, dangers and distance they face.

And the Legislature is passing bills declaring English the official language of Arizona and denying illegal immigrants access to English classes.

Michael Nicley, Tucson sector chief for the Border Patrol, said more agents eventually will stop people from entering the United States illegally - an unrealistically optimistic prediction.

In the past, more resources have only shifted the problem - now to the desert where death is far more likely. Short of stationing agents within sight of each other along the 350-mile Arizona-Mexico border, illegal crossings cannot be stopped.

The only solution is comprehensive immigration reform such as that proposed in bipartisan legislation introduced by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., and other members of the Senate and House.

President Bush remains regrettably absent from this debate. Before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Bush was interested in immigration reform. Since then, he has been virtually silent. Yet reform would be one of the best ways to make this nation more secure.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): Kyl border bill - Enforcement can't do it all 06/07

June 7, 2005

Beefed-up border enforcement is the key to a new immigration policy being drafted by Republican U.S. Sens. Jon Kyl of Arizona and John Cornyn of Texas.

Problem is, no matter how many Border Patrol agents get added, the number of illegal immigrants increases even more.

Also increasing in that equation is our cost. The five-month training per agent runs about $179,000.

Manpower and money haven't made a dent in illegal immigration yet, and we don't expect that to change anytime soon.

What must change is the hypocritical and illegal arrangement by which our employers hire illegal foreigners without any real threat of sanction.

The Kyl-Cornyn proposal would add investigators and tougher penalties for such employers. But it also would force the workers to return to their own countries before seeking permission to work here.

That makes sense in many respects. They arrived illegally, so they should be sent home until they can enter legally.

Realistically, though, sending all illegal workers back home until they can make their way through the long bureaucratic process to get papers would effectively stop a good share of the U.S. economy.

And that's assuming the workers could be found to face deportation, since most simply would dig deeper into hiding.

While the tough tone of the Kyl-Cornyn proposal underscores the serious nature of this problem, it ignores the nuances.

We need to secure not only our borders, but also our homeland. That means we must find and identify all illegal immigrants already here. The threat of immediate deportation would make that security provision impossible.

We prefer the approach outlined by other Arizona Republicans, including Sen. John McCain and Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake. Their proposal would spur greater homeland safety - without impeding our economy - by allowing workers to be identified and obtain permission to work here.

Our nation desperately needs immigration reform, but the hot potato issue long has been kept on the back burner in Washington, D.C.

We're delighted that McCain, Kolbe, Kyl and other border-state leaders finally are addressing this controversial issue.

However, having waited this long for reform, Americans deserve an effective policy. So far, the Kyl-Cornyn draft doesn't meet that basic requirement.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): Kolbe senses progress on immigration 07/06
Our Opinion:
Tucson Citizen
Wednesday, July 6, 2005

The discussion on immigration reform may slowly be gaining national traction.

And that qualifies as major progress for those of us in southern Arizona, where immigration issues are not just a scholarly debate but a matter of daily life.

U.S. Rep. Jim Kolbe, who has spent more time working on immigration problems than virtually any other member of Congress, says he is sensing progress. On this issue, progress is measured in glacial terms. Nonetheless, any forward movement is good news indeed.

In a visit yesterday with the Tucson Citizen Editorial Board, Kolbe said, "There is no doubt the immigration issue has moved up a few notches in Congress and with the American people." Kolbe said some of the increased attention has been from those concerned about the nation's security in light of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

And Kolbe noted that the efforts of the Minutemen played a role in increasing awareness of the problems of illegal immigration. The Minutemen were a group of civilians who came to a stretch of the U.S.-Mexican border in Cochise County in April to "patrol" and look for illegal immigrants.

The Minutemen, who have moved on to projects in other states, had virtually no impact on the number of people crossing the Arizona border illegally. They did only what the Border Patrol and other authorities have accomplished: temporarily shift the problem to more remote areas.

Kolbe, a Republican, compared congressional interest on immigration with another issue he has been pushing hard: Social Security reform. "Unlike Social Security, Congress cannot put their heads in the sand," Kolbe said. "The public is demanding they do something (about immigration)."

If it takes leadership from the American people to push Congress on this issue, so be it. Interest also has been spurred with the recent involvement of two high-profile senators, Republican John McCain of Arizona and Democrat Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts.

Kolbe has long been pushing a comprehensive rewrite of the nation's immigration laws - including a guest worker program, provisions for dealing with people now in the United States illegally and changes to laws dealing with employers' responsibilities to verify a person's right to work in this country.

There are those who want to fix immigration laws piecemeal. That will not work. A guest worker plan must deal with people now in this country. Employer sanctions must come only after there is a way for employers to quickly and accurately check a potential employee's status.

There must be a comprehensive fix for this multifaceted problem. And maybe - just maybe - Congress, pushed by the persistence of the American people, may be moving slowly in that direction.

We hope so.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): Immigration still is low on Bush's agenda 07/27
Our Opinion: Tucson Citizen
July 27, 2005

President Bush has said that - finally - immigration reform is high on his to-do list. But actions of some in his administration make us question his commitment.

The Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday began hearings on comprehensive immigration reform bills. Absent were two witnesses who were supposed to represent the Bush administration: Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The White House withdrew the two witnesses without explanation. That is not surprising, given Bush's on-again, off-again commitment to immigration reform.

Although we in Arizona are familiar with the economic problems of illegal immigration and the heartbreaking stories of the hundreds who die each year in the desert, it is a tragedy that has yet to galvanize Congress - or Bush - to act.

We had high hopes that was changing.

Virtually all Arizonans in both houses of Congress have signed onto one of several immigration reform bills making the rounds in Washington, D.C.

The newest bill, from Sens. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., and John Cornyn, R-Texas, would create a strictly enforced guest worker program. It differs in one key aspect from a bill by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.

The Kyl-Cornyn bill would require that illegal immigrants leave the United States before applying for guest worker and permanent resident status. The McCain-Kennedy bill would require illegal immigrants to come forward and pay a fine but would let them stay in the United States as they apply for the guest worker program.

The goal, for national security purposes, must be to find out who is in this country illegally.

The McCain proposal is likely to be far more successful in enticing people to come forward. Faced with the requirement that they leave the country, as the Kyl bill does, and the economic hardship that would impose, those here illegally would have little incentive to participate.

As Congress debates the various immigration reform proposals, it must settle on a bill that is comprehensive.

People in this country illegally must be identified and their backgrounds must be checked. Those who are national security threats must be arrested or deported. There must be a workable guest worker program that meets the needs of workers who want jobs and employers who have jobs that cannot otherwise be filled.

The borders must be secured so that authorities know who is entering the country - whether to work or to cause harm.

Immigration reform is coming to the fore in Congress because of fear: fear of national security breaches and fear that inaction will hurt re-election chances.

If that's what it takes, fine. Let's move forward. And Bush must get off the sidelines and be a player in this debate.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): New duds 08/05

Our Opinion: Tucson Citizen
August 5, 2005

Illegal immigrants are suspected in a break-in at U.S. Rep. Jim Kolbe's home in Sonoita, where burglars showered, microwaved a meal for themselves and then donned the congressman's clothes, leaving most of his valuables untouched.

This crime poses a particularly interesting scenario, because of who Kolbe is and what he is working on in Congress.

Kolbe, who grew up near Arizona's border with Mexico, has introduced a proposal that finally would provide comprehensive reforms to our sorely lacking immigration policies.

His proposal, also sponsored by U.S. Sens. John McCain and Edward Kennedy, includes a guest worker program that would allow more people who want to work in the United States to enter this country legally.

Should this bill pass, and we hope it does, it also might spare Kolbe's wardrobe.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): Immigration still eludes Bush's grasp 08/31

Our Opinion: Tucson Citizen
August 31, 2005

Progress on immigration reform must unfortunately be measured in the tiniest of forward steps.

The topic seems to finally be on President Bush's radar screen - a definite move forward. But Bush remains focused almost exclusively on enforcement, with little talk of a long-term and more comprehensive solution - a discouraging step back.

During a Monday visit to the Phoenix area to discuss his Medicare prescription drug plan, Bush was compelled to discuss illegal immigration. The issue would have been impossible to avoid in Arizona - the most popular crossing point on the U.S.-Mexico border.

"I understand it's putting a strain on your resources," Bush said. "It's important for the people of this state to understand, your voices are being heard in Washington, D.C."

A strain on our resources? That's a gross understatement. Arizona taxpayers have been crushed by the impacts of illegal immigration. The state has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to hold illegal immigrants in prisons without federal reimbursements. Counties and health-care providers also have been hard hit.

And while it is good that our "voices are being heard," it is discouraging that it has taken so long for immigration to rise up the issue heap in the nation's capital - especially when Bush is the former governor of a border state with substantial illegal immigration problems of its own.

Bush cited enforcement as an effective way to halt illegal immigration, with little or no attention to a comprehensive package built on a guest worker program.

He referred to legislation introduced by Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., that calls for more agents on the border and a guest worker program that requires people now here illegally to return to their home countries to register. It's not the needed comprehensive answer.

Far more practical is a bipartisan plan pushed by Sen. John McCain and Rep. Jim Kolbe, both Arizona Republicans, as well as others on both sides of the political aisle. That plan would allow people in the country illegally to stay and pay a fine before registering as guest workers.

A new report released yesterday illustrates the pressing need for comprehensive border-policy reform. Suspected or convicted foreign-born terrorists have routinely exploited immigration laws over the past decade to enter and remain in the United States illegally, according to the Center for Immigration Studies.

We are encouraged that Bush mentioned immigration during his Arizona visit. But now he must move forward and embrace a plan that is both comprehensive and workable.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): Deficiencies in Bush plan on immigration 10/20

Our Opinion: Tucson Citizen
October 20, 2005

President Bush has started to put flesh on the bones of his immigration reform promises, and the initial outlook is not encouraging.

Bush has long said comprehensive immigration reform would be a mainstay of his second-term agenda. But until this week, he has backed up that pledge with only vague generalities.

This week, some details emerged. It is clear that Bush hopes to use the immigration issue as a way to solidify his shaky conservative base.

Conservatives in Congress have told Bush they will not discuss a guest worker program or any aspect of immigration reform until the border is sealed. That sounds appealing but is wildly impractical.

The facts are these: In big cities and in some small towns, the United States has built steel and concrete walls along the border. The number of Border Patrol agents has been tripled in the past couple of years. Still, agents made 1.17 million arrests in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

Moves to seal the border have failed

Efforts to seal the border have failed. An estimated 11 million illegal immigrants are in this country, playing a vital role in our national economy.

Immigration reform cannot be tackled piecemeal. The border must be made more secure - but that can be done only as part of a comprehensive plan that includes a guest worker component.

The Bush administration seemed to understand this. "We're going to need more than just brute enforcement," Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told the Senate Judiciary Committee this week. "We're going to need a temporary worker program as well."

But administration officials said the Bush immigration reform plan will allow those now illegally in the United States to pay a fine and join a guest worker program for only six years before returning to their home countries.

It doesn't take much imagination to know that when those six years expire, many people will simply melt back into the United States instead of leaving.

TUCSON CITIZEN (AZ): Arizonans in Congress have better plan 10/20

Our Opinion: Tucson Citizen
October 20, 2005

A far better plan is being pushed by Sen. John McCain and Reps. Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake, all Arizona Republicans, as well as some Democrats in both houses.

That proposal would offer illegal immigrants the opportunity to work toward a permanent work permit and possibly citizenship if they come forward and become part of a guest worker program.

Any plan that calls for sending illegal immigrants home ignores basic realities: Businesses need the labor, and many immigrants have children who were born in the United States and are American citizens.

It does no one any good to force illegal immigrants deeper underground. The goal is to know who is in this country and find a way to allow them to work legally under a system in which both they and employers are treated equitably.

Arizonans understand this. A poll commissioned by The Arizona Republic found that most Arizonans do not want to force illegal immigrants out of the country if they are established in communities and have no criminal record.

An immigration bill might be the next major piece of legislation debated in the Senate, though probably not before the Thanksgiving recess. Efforts must focus on coming up with legislation that is comprehensive - and also workable.

VICTORIA ADVOCATE (TX): Reform policy on immigration 07/10

Sunday, July 10, 2005

U.S. Sen. John Cornyn's brief stop in Victoria last week surely told him little he did not already know about problems resulting from illegal immigration in South Texas, even this far in from the U.S. border with Mexico.

But spending a little time with a small group of area law enforcement officers and landowners - although not with a broad range of the constituents who pay his salary - should have impressed upon Texas' junior senator the need to step up efforts to reform the nation's immigration policies and their enforcement.

Cornyn is one of a small number of members of Congress, also including most of Arizona's delegation, who have been working seriously on immigration issues for the past few years. Unfortunately, not enough of their colleagues have joined in this effort to move it forward.

The Bush administration has been hit-and-miss on this issue, not providing the kind of high-profile leadership needed to prompt substantive congressional debate and action.

Prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush talked with Mexican President Vicente Fox about immigration reform, but the war against terrorism and the invasion of Iraq distracted from that. The two presidents have not sufficiently gotten past their disagreement on Iraq to move forward on immigration.

And Fox's government has proven less-than-realistic in its expectations of what kind of reforms either Bush or Congress - or the American people - would be willing to support. The Mexican government naively seems to believe that a blanket amnesty for undocumented immigrants already in the United States and what amounts to an open border for future migration is the right answer, but Congress would not - and could not - even consider that.

Cornyn has said repeatedly that a balance has to be struck between economic needs on the one hand and security and law enforcement needs on the other. That is both realistic and necessary. In the short term, local law enforcement agencies need additional federal funding to deal with problems resulting from increased illegal migration across the porous U.S.-Mexico border.

A comprehensive plan for immigration reform, as we have previously said in this space, has to include these components:

Control the nation's borders, not just with Mexico, but also with Canada. Our Northern exposure also remains too porous. This is not just an immigration issue. It is also necessary for homeland security.

Ensure an adequate available legal supply of unskilled and semi-skilled low-cost labor. The extent of the need for this should drive legal admission levels for would-be immigrants who lack the education and financial resources that otherwise would justify their admission.

Protect the rights of legal immigrants so that they are not abused, exploited or mistreated by unscrupulous employers.

Somehow regularize the status of undocumented immigrants already in the United States if they are employed and contributing to this country and their newly adopted communities, while also reducing the population of those who do not meet this standard.

Penalize employers for hiring undocumented immigrants, whether knowingly or unknowingly. Employers should no longer have "But I didn't know" wiggle room to get off the hook when their workplaces are found crammed full of illegal workers they are exploiting.

Increase the penalties to be so financially painful that they cannot be passed off as "a cost of doing business." Add prison time for subsequent offenses.

Bolster enforcement resources to crack down on employers of undocumented workers and to guard the nation's borders.

Revamp how immigrants - legal and illegal - and American citizens identify themselves. Although the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform in 1994 backed down from proposing a national identification card, the intervening decade has shown ever-greater need for such a document that requires sufficient verification to obtain and is counterfeit- and tamper-resistant.

In the foreign policy realm, require other governments to do more to control illegal migration to the United States, making this a condition of economic and other assistance.

The American people have to acknowledge that most of us are enablers because we benefit from the lower cost of illegal immigrant labor. If we really want this problem brought under control, we are going to have to pay more, not just for law enforcement and border security, but also for consumer goods and services.

Americans who demand that the federal government crack down on illegal immigration without themselves being willing to pay for it are hypocrites.

The task Sen. Cornyn and his colleagues working on immigration issues face is nearly overwhelming - and increasingly necessary.

VICTORIA ADVOCATE (TX): Immigration reform 08/17

Wednesday, August 17, 2005

Neither of the major immigration reform bills before Congress - one sponsored by U.S. Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., the other by U.S. Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass. - separately will resolve the issue of illegal immigration. Incorporating elements from both considerably improves the likelihood of doing so.

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The American people have to acknowledge that most of us are enablers because we benefit from the lower cost of illegal immigrant labor. If we really want this problem brought under control, we are going to have to pay more, not just for law enforcement and border security, but also for consumer goods and services.

The McCain-Kennedy bill would allow some or many of the 11 million undocumented workers already in the country to remain here if they pay fines. They then could work legally. Since many already are working, although illegally, this would recognize that they are contributing to the U.S. economy and the economies of the communities in which they live.

The Cornyn-Kyl measure would require the 11 million undocumented workers to return to their home countries within five years before they could apply for entry as guest workers. This would result in a major labor shortage in the unskilled trades where undocumented workers most readily find employment.

Then there is the cost of deporting all the illegal immigrants already in the country. The Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank based in Washington, D.C., estimates that rounding up 11 million or so of them over a five-year period would cost the federal government more than $40 billion a year, Cox News Service reported.

The exact cost is impossible to know now, but it would not be small. The center's figures are probably at least in the neighborhood. If this were the only way to resolve the illegal immigration problem, Americans would have to grin and bear the cost. But the McCain-Kennedy bill offers a less costly, better approach.

Federal enforcement should be directed to rounding up and deporting illegal immigrants who are in gangs and commit crimes and who drain public benefits and aid, rather than those who are working and contributing to the economy. Under McCain-Kennedy, the latter would stay and would go on the books, rather than continuing in the underground economy.

The chief portion of the Cornyn-Kyl bill that should be grafted onto McCain-Kennedy provides for tougher sanctions on employers who still hire undocumented workers after the new legislation takes effect.

Cornyn-Kyl calls for "10,000 new enforcement agents and 1,000 new agents to detect application fraud. Fines will increase for employers who hire undocumented workers. Will establish new national ID system with new secure Social Security cards and electronic verification system," Pacific News Service reported.

At the same time, what Frank Sharry, the executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based National Immigration Forum, told Pacific News Service also makes a great deal of sense: "If you have a legalized system and take away opportunities for widespread abuse and exploitation by employers, a secure electronic verification system supported by both business and labor could work."

The bills awaiting consideration by the Senate Judiciary Committee are good starts on what should be a thorough, analytical debate on this complicated issue.

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT (Hampton Roads, VA): Immigrant bashing won't fix problems 08/23

The Virginian-Pilot
August 23, 2005 Last updated: 9:32 AM

Illegal immigration is a complex national problem.

It won't be solved by piecemeal attacks such as that of GOP gubernatorial hopeful Jerry Kilgore in opposing a day laborer site in Herndon.

Such tactics fuel anti-immigrant prejudices while skipping the hard part, acknowledging the broad tradeoffs and difficult compromises necessary for a permanent solution.

If exploitation of nativist emotion isn't Kilgore's intention, then he should pull the plug on this line of campaigning.

At issue is the proposal of a coalition of community organizations to open a day laborer site in a soon-to-be abandoned police station straddling the Herndon-Loudoun County line. Currently, scores of men gather daily at a nearby convenience store to await the arrival of private employers who hire them for day labor in construction, yard work, and the like.

Kilgore joined critics calling the proposed site a haven for illegal immigrants and a breeding ground for illegal activity.

But others argue convincingly that an official site, including a police or security presence, would more likely contain bad behavior while serving both small-time employers and legal workers. The Herndon council validated that view with a 5-2 vote Wednesday to open the center.

No doubt, some illegals will turn up there. But frustration with U.S. failure to stem the flow of illegal immigration ought to be directed toward Congress, the immigration service or others with an opportunity to make a real difference.

Virginians who grouse about illegal immigrants should open their eyes and see who's really tending their lawns, putting new shingles on their roofs, cleaning toilets in their office building and hotels. Illegal immigrants are doing the dirty jobs that Virginians don't want.

Kilgore characterized the problem in Herndon as one of illegals taking "hard-earned dollars from law-abiding citizens."

In fact, the issue there and elsewhere wouldn't exist except for America's addiction to cheap labor. Undocumented workers sustain many of the services and prices Americans have come to expect.

Politicians as diverse as President George Bush, GOP Sen. John McCain and Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy acknowledge that a much-expanded temporary worker program, combined with some form of enforceable amnesty for illegals with long tenure here, is the only hope for getting a handle on the problem.

Name-calling about undocumented workers who supposedly leach the system dry might win votes. But it won't make the problem go away.

LA VOZ (Phoenix, AZ): Hacia una solución 05/25
Mayo 25, 2005

La propuesta hecha por McCain y compañía ha venido a darle un tanto de coherencia y sentido común a una discusión que desde hace mucho se ha salido de tono por completo: la inmigración indocumentada.

La iniciativa de ley conocida como "The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005" propone, por fin, salidas lógicas para poder abandonar ese callejón sin final en el cual se han metido y se han revuelto todo tipo de ideas, iniciativas y acciones a cual más irracional, surgidas de mentes que no piensan con frialdad y objetivismo sino con el calor de sus extremismos y sus odios.

En ese callejón están metidos y extraviados los legisladores republicanos de la nación y de Arizona, inventando a diestra y siniestra leyes sin sentido y sin humanismo, que en vez de solucionar el problema lo complican.

Aquí, en Arizona, la gobernadora ha tenido que empuñar la espada del veto y partir en dos algunas de esas iniciativas que no solamente atacan a los indocumentados sino también impactan negativamente a otros sectores de la sociedad, lo cual no puede permitirse.

Probablemente a Napolitano esas acciones le cuesten votos cuando quiera reelegirse. Pero celebramos que ella no esté pensando en eso, y que actúe con la serenidad de pensamiento que deben tener quienes gobiernan y quienes elaboran las leyes. Lo cual, a todas luces, no sucede con el puñado de legisladores furiosamente antiinmigrantes que ha invadido la Legislatura estatal.

Si la razón se impone –esa que muestran McCain, Ted Kennedy, Luis Gutiérrez, Jeff Flake y Jim Kolbe en el Congreso federal y Janet Napolitano en el gobierno estatal- el espinoso asunto de la inmigración podrá finalmente encausarse hacia una solución.

Y por fin podrán pasar a los planos secundarios de los medios de información los Minuteman, los rancheros, los Schwarzenegger, los Russell Pearce, los Childress, los Randy Pullen, las Kathy McGee.

Podrán pasar a donde deben estar.

WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD (TX): Sane immigration policy 08/22

Monday, August 22, 2005

Let's get real about role of foreign workers

It's time for Congress to make some tough decisions on immigration.

This issue is not going away. Just the opposite. The longer Congress fails to act, the greater the problem.

The governors of two border states, New Mexico and Arizona, recently declared states of emergency in response to the flow of illegal immigrants coming across their borders.

By doing so, the governors now are eligible for federal aid to help their states confront a problem that is supposed to be handled by the federal government.

The Democratic governors, Bill Richardson of New Mexico and Janet Napolitano of Arizona, are eligible for $1.75 million and $1.5 million respectively in federal money to help them fight escalating gang violence and drug smuggling associated with the flow of illegal immigrants.

Both governors say they would prefer that the federal government deal with these problems rather than leaving them for the states.

Mexican President Vicente Fox criticized the governors' actions. Fox said controlling cross-border crime must be a joint responsibility.

Officials worry about the infiltration of terrorists during a war against global terrorism.

The economic impact of illegal immigration has been an ongoing, and often bitter, debate nearly since a common border between Mexico and the United States was established in the mid-19th century.

George W. Bush targeted immigration reform early in his presidency. Fox and Bush appeared in agreement on a plan to permit Mexican workers to live and work legally in the United States by matching workers with jobs.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks pushed reform into the background, but the issue has only grown larger and more difficult since Sept. 11.

Since last October, federal agents have arrested more than 500,000 illegal border crossers in only two sectors along the Arizona border. An estimated 12 million illegal immigrants now live and work in the United States.

A majority of these workers represent a peaceful, productive and necessary segment of America's economy, yet their status remains illegal.

Congress, with the administration's help, should develop a comprehensive immigration policy that legalizes and documents foreign workers. It also needs to enforce employer sanctions and provide government identification of citizenship.

WALL STREET JOURNAL (NY): Fortress America? 07/20

July 20, 2005; Page A12

The calendar says 2005. But the U.S. immigration debate still seems stuck in 1986, the year Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act that criminalized the hiring of illegal aliens and boosted funding for Mexican border patrols.

After nearly 20 years and numerous enforcement escalations, the undocumented immigrant population continues to grow -- and restrictionist lawmakers continue to insist that throwing ever more money, men and material into border enforcement is the key to fixing the problem.

Yesterday, Senators John Cornyn (R., Texas) and Jon Kyl (R., Ariz.) introduced legislation that would authorize $5 billion over five years "to acquire and deploy unmanned aerial vehicles, camera poles, vehicles barriers, sensors" and other technologies. They'd also create a new 10,000-man army to raid businesses across America and make sure there are no illegal chambermaids working at Marriott For this, we need Republicans?

Never mind that since 1986 the U.S. strategy of spending more and more money on militarizing the border hasn't worked. According to a recent Cato Institute study by Princeton sociologist Douglas Massey, "By 2002, the Border Patrol's budget had reached $1.6 billion and that of the [Immigration and Naturalization Service] stood at $6.2 billion, 10 and 13 times their 1986 values, respectively."

Over the same 16-year period, the number of border patrol officers tripled, and the amount of hours spent patrolling the border increased by a factor of eight. By 2002, Professor Massey notes, "the Border Patrol was the largest arms-bearing branch of the U.S. government next to the military itself."

Meanwhile, the illegal immigration flow has only increased, and all of this extra "enforcement" is arguably one reason. When illegals felt they could more easily cross the border, they'd enter the U.S. on a seasonal (or sometimes even daily) basis or when they needed the money. Then they'd often return home. But with the difficulty of re-entry so much higher in the last 20 years, many more migrant workers choose to remain here permanently. The risk of staying is lower than the price of re-running the border gantlet.

Messrs. Cornyn and Kyl aren't immigrant bashers, and they both support President Bush's concept of a guest worker program. They argue that this enforcement escalation at the border is necessary to gain enough public support to pass such a guest-worker plan, and they may be right about the price of winning over some Republicans. But no one should think that pouring billions more into enforcement will stop Mexicans from crossing the border for economic opportunity, much less induce those already in the U.S. to come out of the shadows.

A more promising reform was introduced in May by Senators John McCain (R., Ariz.) and Ted Kennedy (D., Mass.). Their approach is a welcome acknowledgment of certain realities -- namely, that enforcement-only policies have failed repeatedly and that wiser uses of limited government manpower and tax dollars are in order.

Based on the fact that the vast majority of migrants come here in search of work, Senators McCain and Kennedy aim to lower the level of illegal immigration by expanding our relatively few channels for legal entry to meet the demand. Giving economic immigrants legal ways to enter the U.S. will reduce business for human smugglers and counterfeiters. Moreover, it will allow our border authorities to concentrate their resources on chasing down real security threats instead of nannies and gardeners.

In short, the McCain-Kennedy bill would enhance homeland security without harming the immigrant labor market so essential to the country's economic well-being. But the measure's guest-worker initiative, which would allow undocumented migrants already here to work legally if they first pay sizable fines and undergo criminal background checks, has brought charges of "amnesty" from Republicans who call any "work and stay" provision a poison pill.

This "amnesty" charge may be potent as a political slogan, but it becomes far less persuasive when you examine its real-world implications. If paying a fine isn't good enough for illegals already here, what are the restrictionists proposing? Mass arrests, raids on job-creating businesses, or deportations? No illegal settled in a job or U.S. community is going to admit his status if he will then immediately be jailed or sent home to wait in line for years before he can get his old U.S. job back. Those who wave the "no amnesty" flag are actually encouraging a larger underground illegal population.

Republicans in Congress may well decide to push an immigration "reform" that militarizes the border and harasses more businesses. But we doubt they have the votes to pass it without a guest worker component, and in any case it won't work. The only reform that has a chance to succeed is one that recognizes the reality that 10 or so million illegal aliens already work in the U.S. and are vital to the economy and their communities. More enforcement is a slogan, not a solution.

WASHINGTON POST (DC): Enter McCain-Kennedy 05/14

Saturday, May 14, 2005; A20

IMMIGRATION legislation introduced Thursday by Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) is not the first, and may not be the last, attempt to forge a realistic, comprehensive and bipartisan national immigration policy. In the last Congress, Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) and Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) also tried it, and others have introduced bills containing similar elements. But there are reasons to hope that this bill will move further. The authors have struggled, with one another and with widely varying advocates, to find compromise answers to some of the more difficult immigration issues.

The bill requires new investment in border security and technology. But it also allows employers to hire foreigners under a temporary visa program if they can prove they are unable to hire American workers for the same job. Visa-holders will be able to change jobs (which the discredited *bracero* guest-worker programs of the past did not allow); will be able to apply to stay (eliminating a potential source of new illegal immigration), and will be issued tamper-proof identity documents (ending the use of faked Social Security numbers).

Most controversially -- but ultimately sensibly -- the bill allows illegal immigrants already here to regularize their status, but not easily; they would have to go to the end of the line, and that only after paying a hefty fine, staying employed for a prescribed period and paying back taxes. The bills' authors argue that this is not an amnesty, because it requires a recognition of wrongdoing. They also argue that establishing the temporary visa will prevent a new pool of illegal immigrants from arriving because it will become politically realistic to fine employers who continue to employ illegals. Most of all, this provision for illegal immigrants makes sense because any legislation that does not deal with the approximately 10 million illegals will ultimately result in more lawbreaking.

Although the politics of immigration are convoluted -- this is an issue that divides both parties -- this law has some political points in its favor. While the White House may not want to pile immigration onto its plate next to Social Security, the McCain-Kennedy bill does resemble the policy the president outlined more than a year ago, so it should attract his support. Border state politicians are clamoring for change, because smuggling and trafficking have contributed to lawlessness and a real sense of crisis along the border. Politicians from states that never had major immigration issues in the past, including Maryland and Virginia, have lately struggled with everything from the question of driver's licenses for illegals to the need for seasonal workers on the Chesapeake Bay: They want change, too. Most of all, though, pressure is coming from security agencies and law enforcement. The illegal immigrants' underworld is a source of illegal documentation and criminality, and the de facto open borders are an invitation to terrorists.

There are legitimate concerns about the long-term impact of a law such as this on American workers. But the economic impact is more complicated than some immigration opponents claim: Experience has shown that immigration creates jobs and growth over time, and countries with low immigration, such as Japan, aren't exactly an advertisement for their policies. There are also legitimate concerns about social cohesion. But legal workers are much easier to assimilate than illegals, and the proposed bill requires would-be citizens to know English and civics. This is a case where common sense and hard-nosed security concerns point in the same direction, and this bill could lead the way.

WASHINGTON POST (DC): Mute on Immigration 07/26

Tuesday, July 26, 2005; A18

ABRUPTLY -- so abruptly that the White House press office appeared not to know about it -- the administration withdrew its two witnesses, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao, yesterday from today's Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on comprehensive immigration reform. No explanation was given. A better metaphor for the White House's inability to articulate an immigration policy would be hard to find: So divided is the administration that its leading members aren't even allowed to talk about the subject in public.

The absence of the administration won't diminish the significance of today's hearings, however. Despite the coming August recess and the Judiciary Committee's preoccupation with a Supreme Court nomination, four senators have now put their names on two serious pieces of immigration legislation. Pressure from them, as well as from a host of other senators from both parties who back immigration reform, seems to be pushing the issue forward. More to the point, the two bills provide a fairly good summary of where the sides in the immigration debate stand.

Both bills propose a guest worker program, tamper-proof forms of identity for all visa-holders and more money for border security. But the measure that will appeal most to the immigration restrictionists was introduced by Sens. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) and John Cornyn (R-Tex.). In essence, their bill would allow people to come from abroad and work here for up to two years before returning; would require illegal immigrants already here to return home before applying to join that program; and would add 10,000 new Border Patrol officers, 1,250 customs officers, more jail space and $5 billion worth of high-tech spending to improve border control.

Supporters of the opposing bill, introduced by Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), believe the Kyl-Cornyn proposal is unrealistic. Mr. McCain points out that people who have been in this country for decades illegally will not go home voluntarily if they aren't convinced they'll be able to come back -- and that even if it worked, any program that abruptly ejected all 10 million estimated illegal immigrants could end up "wrecking America's economy." For that reason, the McCain-Kennedy bill requires illegals to pay a fine and back taxes and return to the back of the immigration queue, but it ultimately allows them to apply for legal status. The two senators argue that this is not an amnesty, because it requires a recognition of wrongdoing. They also argue that their bill, which creates a longer, more flexible temporary work visa, will encourage more people to cross the border legally. They are probably right.

It is possible, of course, that a compromise could be found, and indeed the outline of one is visible: It would contain high levels of enforcement; new funds for the borders and for identity cards; a realistic temporary visa program; and some means of legalizing those who are here without granting them a free pass. But no grand compromise will occur without political momentum and political leadership, from the strangely silent White House as well as Congress.

WASHINGTON POST (DC): Border Emergency 08/26

Friday, August 26, 2005; A20

THERE ARE, NO DOUBT, elements of politics and showmanship in the recent moves by the governors of New Mexico and Arizona to declare states of emergency along their borders with Mexico. New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano are both Democrats up for reelection next year -- Mr. Richardson harbors presidential ambitions as well -- and illegal immigration is a front-burner issue in both states. The declarations free up state funds to be spent on extra patrols, equipment and other needs. But the acts are even more important as a cage-rattling device -- an "act of desperation," as Mr. Richardson called it, to prod Congress and the Bush administration to pay attention to the growing problem.

To the extent that these declarations are a publicity stunt to get Washington moving, we hope they work. Scores of illegal immigrants are dying in the hot desert. Drug smuggling, human trafficking and associated crimes are on the rise. The system is overwhelmed: Even if there were enough border patrol agents to apprehend all the undocumented workers, which there aren't, there wouldn't be enough other staff to process them or, especially in the case of those from countries other than Mexico, enough beds to hold them until they can be sent home. Meanwhile, as the recent controversy over day laborers in Herndon illustrates, the impact of illegal immigration reaches well beyond border states. As Ms. Napolitano predicted at a luncheon with Washington Post reporters and editors this week, "It's a border state issue now, but it's going to be a national issue."

And it's one that can't be solved through stepped-up enforcement alone: There is too much supply on the part of those who want to enter the United States, legally or illegally, and too much demand on the part of employers to fill jobs that would go begging without foreign workers. This is a point on which the Bush administration and the Democratic governors agree, at least in theory. President Bush has proposed -- though he's failed to push -- a plan for temporary worker visas that could reduce the incentive to enter the country illegally. "A strategy that simply hires a lot of border patrol agents and puts them on the line is not an effective strategy," Michael Chertoff, Department of Homeland Security secretary, told reporters this week.

There are some reasons to hope this fall could be the time for a more sensible, comprehensive approach. A proposal by Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) includes a temporary guest worker program similar to the one the president outlined. Sens. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) and John Cornyn (R-Tex.) have put forward a more restrictive measure. "Immigration reform is going to be an interesting subject when we get back to Washington, D.C.," Mr. Bush said earlier this month. "I'm looking forward to the topic."

What's needed from Mr. Bush, though, is a commitment not simply to observe the debate over immigration reform but to join, if not lead, it. The episode just before the congressional recess, in which the administration abruptly withdrew its two witnesses from a Senate hearing on immigration reform, was not a good omen. But perhaps five weeks in a border state will buttress Mr. Bush's commitment to fix the problem of illegal immigration, not to simply talk about it.

WEST HAWAII TODAY (Big Island, HI): Real immigration reform 05/17

Tuesday, May 17, 2005 11:16 AM HST

At long last, a start on real immigration reform. Not the piecemeal approach that has marked previous efforts to deal with this country's dual personality on the issue.

Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., have crafted realistic legislation that acknowledges the economic need (by including a guest worker program) and the human suffering and unfairness inherent in a system that forces immigrants to exist in the shadows.

New guest workers, initially capped at 400,000 yearly, would get a three-year visa, renewable once. They could apply for permanent residency after four years. Illegal immigrants already here would be allowed to get a temporary visa valid for six years, after which they could apply for permanent residency if they paid $2,000, back taxes and learned English.

In both cases, with new and existing workers, applicants would have to have clean criminal histories and pose no security risks.

Simply, this is win-win. It recognizes that the nation, with an ever-shrinking labor force, requires these workers if the economy is to thrive. But it also recognizes that it is simply un-American to tell immigrants that they are good enough to work for us but not good enough to be one of us.

But, of course, the anti-immigrant folks have already drawn their knives. "There is a little more lipstick on this pig than there was before, but it's most certainly the same old pig," said Rep. Tom Tancredo, the Colorado Republican who has led the anti-immigrant movement in the House. And that's where most of the opposition is expected to come from, though more fair-minded members have introduced the same bill there.

When the rhetoric reaches fever pitch, senators and House members will have to remember that no matter how much folks cry "amnesty," this bill really doesn't take us there. It is earned residency.

Working here for six years, paying $2,000 and the fact that illegal immigrants who get the new work visas don't jump to the head of the line for permanent residency tell the tale. If this is amnesty, then pigs -- with or without lipstick -- fly.

The legislation also provides for better border security and, by allowing guest workers to travel to and from their mother countries, helps ensure that fewer of their family members join them here.

In short, unlike previous efforts, this legislation is serious and humane. Perhaps it can be improved upon in the legislative process, but it's a reasonable approach to a problem long in need of reasonableness.

WICHITA FALLS TIMES RECORD NEWS (TX): It's not an easy job... 08/30
Our Opinions: With their willingness and skills, Mexican workers deserve better

August 30, 2005

If the United States didn't have good jobs available, immigration from Mexico and other Central and South American countries would be no problem.

Workers would just stay home.

But, this country does have plenty of opportunities, so many that men, women and children from Mexico are willing to risk their lives to get here.

Look around Wichita Falls, for example.

Who's building this city?

From road crews to home-framers and brick-layers, gardeners to cooks, Mexican workers are putting their skills to work.

Whether they are documented or not, these folks are hard workers, and employers are hiring them because they know that.

Those on the far right want them sent home. Who knows why? If they fill jobs that U.S. citizens won't fill, doesn't that boost our economy? The more adamant of them want to create militias and augment the Border Patrol. That's pretty dangerous-sounding, besides being an exercise in futility.

Those who are more realistic recognize that these undocumented workers are here, and it would be impossible to round all of them up and send them back to their homes across our southern borders.

Thus Republican Sen. John McCain and Democratic Sen. Ted Kennedy have joined together to introduce legislation that would create 400,000 three-year visas for guest workers.

More could be added in the future, according to an AP report.

That's a good start, one that President Bush apparently supports. The business community also seems to support it, and members of that community know they have to or have jobs go unfilled.

It's to be hoped that any legislation will make sure that undocumented workers are paid a legal wage and are subject to receiving benefits. A program such as the one suggested can't institutionalize exploitation.

But, if we have an estimated 10 million undocumented folks in this country, then something far more realistic will be required.

And one unrealistic aspect of the McCain-Kennedy measure is to require each undocumented worker found to pay $2,000 and back taxes. Then those seeking permanent status would have a six-year probationary period to learn English and study civics, according to John Hughes, editor of the Deseret Morning News in Salt Lake City, writing in The Christian Science Monitor.

That sounds like a stretch.

Bottom line: It just no longer makes good sense for the United States to ignore the fact that we have a need for hard workers from below the border and that we need a way to make sure they are treated with the respect any human being deserves.

WILLCOX ARIZONA RANGE NEWS (AZ): Much to say, little action on border front 10/26

October 26, 2005

Immigration, immigration, immigration. The topic steadily remains an issue in America. And this week was no exception.

On Tuesday, Congress heard from Bush administration officials that they believe a guest-worker program would be the best way to help solve the stream of illegal immigrants that comes over the U.S.-Mexico border.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff admitted to Congress that the government can't stop illegal immigrants from coming into the United States by just tightening the border and cracking down on companies employing undocumented workers.

Instead, he said the government must create a program that would give millions of illegal immigrants a shot at legal, temporary work status.

This, to some, is described as amnesty. To others, it's described as a solution.

On the same day, President Bush signed a bill to add more agents to the ever-expanding U.S. Border Patrol in hopes of securing the border. And he vowed to get tough on illegal immigration.

"We're going to get control of our borders," Bush said.

Problem is, we don't have control of our borders, and his own Homeland Security secretary doesn't see that happening any time soon.

We don't see fast action by Congress on reforming the immigration system. Several congressmen have proposals on how to improve border security and guest-worker programs, but the House and the Senate aren't poised to vote on these proposals, which would mean serious discussions.

On Wednesday, an invitation-only forum in Phoenix sponsored by The Arizona Republic and ThinkAz, a nonpartisan research group, had officials saying the immigration system is broken and increasing border enforcement alone won't fix it, according to The Associated Press.

If the system is so broken, why haven't our government officials, including the president and Congress, taken more action than throwing money and resources to beefing up the border? They've been doing that since the mid 1980s, to no avail.

These questions leave Cochise County residents and the nation wondering how serious the intentions of many on Capitol Hill are at this time. But by virtue of their inaction, we suspect we already know that answer.