

Illegal immigration costly problem, requires solution

When state Rep. Bill Markham, R-Riddle, filed a measure in the House last week to cut off benefits to undocumented immigrants (illegal aliens), Latino leaders, officials and prominent legislators immediately decried the proposal as racist and discriminatory.

Similar to California's Proposition 187, Markham's bill would prohibit publicly funded agencies such as medical facilities and public schools from providing services to most illegal immigrants. These agencies would be required to report violators to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The proposal also requires police to check the immigration status of arrested suspects.

Denounced as a racist, Markham said the measure was not racially motivated and instead aimed at saving Oregon the cost of providing benefits to illegal immigrants.

But Markham was unable to provide any authoritative figures on exactly how much Oregon spends on educating and caring for illegal immigrants.

However, Markham's detrac-



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tors promiscuously fling the racism slur instead of acknowledging there is a problem with illegal immigration.

While Markham's idea has merit in the narrowest sense, its implementation would turn social service providers into enforcement officials, cost the state untold amounts of money for that enforcement and lead to harassment of legal immigrants.

Such legislation would overburden the already strained social service agencies. Forcing police to check on a suspect's immigration status would unnecessarily eat up resources of under-funded departments.

Without a doubt, Latinos — especially Mexicans — will bear the brunt of this policy if it somehow manages to sneak out of committee. First, second and

third generation Latinos who entered the country legally would be subject to unfair torment from multiple fronts, and that is not acceptable.

Sound in principle, the measure seeks to penalize only those who do not belong in the United States. All illegal immigrants, have, by definition, broken the law.

And many in the liberal camp believe illegals should be rewarded for their misconduct in the form of free education and medical benefits. In truth, America has no duty to house and educate illegal aliens.

But a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision requires states to give illegals the same education and non emergency health care as they give to tax-paying citizens.

One study, recently conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, reveals that illegal immigration costs this country \$8.4 billion annually. The humanitarian paradigm suggests we should turn a blind eye to these costs. This is especially true when speaking of education, where children are the primary beneficiaries.

Besides, Oregon doesn't have

the illegal immigrant population even comparable with that of California. To push such a proposal would take immigration enforcement out of federal hands and place the responsibility with the state, at significant cost.

Markham's proposal, along with Proposition 187, speaks to the larger issue of failed immigration policies on the federal level.

A 1986 law offered all illegal aliens in the country amnesty and the opportunity to legalize their status, no questions asked. But many chose to ignore the amnesty deal, fearing a trap.

The trade-off for anti-immigration factions was a promise by federal officials to staunch the waves of illegals by penalizing employers who hire undocumented workers, yet the budget for immigration enforcement received only a minimal increase.

A desire to regulate immigration is not xenophobic or racist.

For years, immigration in America, both legal and illegal, has not been politically correct to discuss in any venue — as if it were "somehow reprehensible for Americans to think of controlling the destiny of their country and

the integrity of their borders," writes Mortimer Zuckerman in *U.S. News and World Report*.

The time is long overdue to revise immigration policies and the penalties for abrogating immigration law. Heavy and costly punishment for those who hire undocumented workers would have an immediate effect on illegal immigration. If employers will not hire illegals, those illegals will eventually stop their northerly migration.

Proposition 187 and Markham's proposal are indicative of an electorate tired of footing the medical and social service bills for individuals not contributing to the tax base. Again, in principle, Markham is correct in pushing reform of immigration enforcement policies.

But the consequences of his proposal far outweigh any perceived benefit. Potential harassment of Hispanic residents and the costs of enforcement from the myriad of agencies affected should doom this proposal before legislators have the opportunity to vote on it.

Joe Harwood is a columnist for the Emerald.

■ LETTERS

Troubled

I have several concerns about an article (*ODE*, Feb. 15), in which Patrick Minford quoted from my letter to the editor (*ODE*, Feb. 17).

I am not familiar with journalistic practices, but it seems unusual an article should be based in part on a letter that wasn't even published, especially when the reporter inferred a quote when he said the "Taiwanese Students Association ... resents the idea of lumping people from Taiwan and mainland China together."

I am troubled by the reporter's use of the word "resent" since I do not feel the attitude in my letter was filled with indignation. Unfortunately, the readers of Minford's article had to rely upon his judgment since they had no letter to which to refer. Another unfortunate use of words was when the reporter referred to the Chinese Student Association as the "Taiwanese organization." The Taiwanese organization represents only Taiwanese students.

The Chinese association's membership includes a wider representation.

But most troubling is the negative spawned by articles, such as his, which highlight dissension. The primary goal of the TSO has very little to do with "political and cultural division." If anything, it is trying to heal "rifts" by educating those who have an interest in Taiwanese culture.

I cannot help but believe the students of the University would have been better served with an article, such as one about the dance troupe from Taiwan who had performed at Robinson Theater the weekend before Minford's piece was published.

Perhaps the best way to get to know who we are and what we are trying to do is to join us at a meeting or an event. Please feel welcome to do so at any time.

After reading Minford's article a number of times, I still cannot determine the primary purpose for writing it.

Shing-Jye Chen
President, Taiwanese
Students Association

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