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Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Congress must act to fix immigration laws

The decades-old debate on illegal immigration has been renewed with President Trump's executive order of Jan. 25 — "Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements."

The order sets administration policy on illegal immigration. In short, it seeks to detain those suspected of violating immigration law, to expedite their claims and to quickly remove those whose legal claims have been rejected.

While they work hard at jobs "Americans" often don't want, by their numbers the undocumented workers have changed the dynamics of the entire U.S. workforce. Their repatriation would have a sizable

impact on our economy, leaving many industries without viable replacements.

Presidents have wide discretion as to how to enforce immigration laws passed by Congress. Trump's order indicates he intends to enforce the statutes. The administration says it will prioritize the deportation of criminal aliens, the 300,000 or so who have committed crimes either in the United States or in their home countries. But the order does not make that distinction.

Trump needs no additional authority to deport illegal immigrants. He might need additional money to fully implement his order, but existing law provides a process

for the repatriation of anyone who has entered the country illegally or violated the terms of a visa.

Driven by crushing poverty, immigrants seeking opportunities impossible at home have illegally flooded across the border — 12 million by most counts. They have placed strains on public education, healthcare and law enforcement.

Once here and armed with forged papers they have found ready employment on farms and construction sites, and in hotels, restaurants, processing plants and other places eager for cheap, reliable labor.

While most are not violent or dangerous, all have violated federal law by entering and

remaining in the country.

Millions have further submitted fake papers to employers, and have assumed other identities for the sake of employment.

They are also real people — real families — with real ties to the United States. They have children, many who are citizens born in the United States, who have never known another home.

We return to what we've always seen as the two legal options facing their dispositions: Make them go, or let them stay.

Only Congress can change the law. And it's time it did.

Congress must offer illegal immigrants temporary legal status and a path to permanent

residency, but not citizenship, after 10 years if they can be properly vetted and meet strict requirements — no prior felony convictions, no violations while awaiting residency, learning to speak English and assimilate, and pay a fine and back taxes.

The border should be secured. A viable guestworker program must be established, and employers must verify the work status of their employees.

We respect the rule of law, and do not lightly suggest rewarding those who have flouted it. But we are reluctant to disrupt the lives of otherwise harmless people who have done what we would do — whatever it takes to ensure the safety and welfare of our families.

OUR VIEW



Photo by Sean Ellis/Capital Press

Hundreds of thousands of pounds of onions were lost when this onion storage shed near Nyssa, Ore., collapsed under the weight of several feet of snow. The scene was repeated across the region.

Record snows devastate onion industry

The Owyhee region gets an average of 7 inches of snow each January, but not this year.

Depending on the area, upwards of 40 inches of snow was dumped on the region, which straddles the border between southeastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho.

The result was a catastrophe.

The region's major cash crop is onions, most of which were stored and packed in dozens of huge buildings that dot the countryside. When more than three feet of snow accumulated on their roofs, the buildings collapsed under the weight, with some employees narrowly escaping the devastation.

Not only were the buildings lost, but tens of millions of dollars worth of onions were exposed to the elements and ruined.

To add insult to injury, safety inspectors showed up and prevented workers from shoveling off the roofs unless they had safety harnesses. Perhaps they should have offered to help

instead of getting in the way.

A little bit of math shows why the buildings collapsed.

As an example, a 50-by-100-foot building has a flat roof with an area of 5,000 square feet. The weight of 1 cubic foot of new-fallen snow ranges from 3.1 pounds to 4.4 pounds — an average of 3.75 pounds.

Doing the math, 40 inches of new snow on that roof would weigh about 102 tons. If the snow is wet, the snow's weight can more than double.

Adding up the cost of the buildings, the packing and shipping lines and the onions, industry leaders estimated the overall damage at upwards of \$100 million.

That's a colossal hit to the region's agricultural economy, which produces about 25 percent of the nation's large-bulb storage onions.

If heavy snows were commonplace in the region, the buildings would have been engineered to withstand the

tremendous snow loads. Since the recent storms constituted a record-setting fluke, the buildings really didn't have a chance of withstanding the massive snow loads.

If there can be an upside to such a disaster, this winter's snowfall will allow the Owyhee Reservoir to completely refill this year and farmers who depend on it will get their full allotment of irrigation water.

The region previously was parched by drought, and irrigation supplies were drastically reduced.

More water is small comfort after so many storage and packing sheds were lost, throwing people out of work and threatening the economic well-being of so many operations.

But most farmers are optimists, and with plentiful irrigation supplies they will be able to recover.

Snow is usually seen as a good thing. In the case of the storms that dumped 40 inches of snow on the Owyhee region, it was too much of a good thing.

Studies cast doubt on GMO food

By PATRICIA MICHL
For the Capital Press

Guest comment
Patricia Michl



A guest columnist too hastily promoted GMO crops in an op-ed piece published last year.

He wrongly discredits the Giles-Eric Seralini study. He states that the Seralini study was retracted in November 2013 by "Food and Chemical Toxicology," but he omits the fact that the study was republished in the "Journal of Environmental Sciences Europe" Vol 26:14 in June 2014.

Respected scientists worldwide had raised a furor over this wrongful retraction. Therefore, the Seralini study is properly citable for the proposition that GMOs are likely harmful to human health.

In fact, the Seralini study is one of the very few lifetime GMO feeding trials; it stands as the gold standard for showing the correlation between GMOs and cancer, tumors and organ damage.

The guest columnist also criticizes Seralini's use of Sprague-Dawley rats. Why Sprague-Dawleys? This strain of rats is standard to health and safety studies due to its high susceptibility to tumors.

Researchers can obtain results in a relatively short period of time. It should be noted that Monsanto also utilizes Sprague-Dawleys in its GMO studies. However, Monsanto's studies end after 3 months. But the human population is expected to eat GMOs for a lifetime.

By contrast, the Seralini study lasted for the lifetime of the rats. The significance of the Seralini study is that even a small group of rats, those fed GMOs, exhibited an alarming number of tumors, lesions and organ abnormalities.

However, the control group, not fed GMOs, had far fewer problems.

The columnist cites GMO safety statements from several governmental organizations. However, government organizations that have approved GMOs are aligned with Big-Ag (Monsanto and other biotech companies).

Government is widely viewed by growing numbers of citizens as no friend of the people. An appropriate analogy would be the close alignment between Big-Pharma and U.S. health authorities (NIH, CDC, FDA, etc.) in suppressing alternative cancer therapies.

The columnist cites two papers by Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam. The first examines the feeding of GMO crops to food-producing animals. It considers feed intake, growth and other livestock production parameters — basically, weight gain and readiness for market. These "production parameters" are irrelevant to the presence of tumors and other organ-relat-

ed disorders which can only be detected through autopsies.

In her second paper Dr. Van Eenennaam states that feeding GMOs to livestock animals does not adversely affect their health. But these are commercial animals that are killed in early adulthood. She does not know about their health later in life on a GMO diet. This is where the Seralini lifetime feeding study is so cogent. It reveals the problems with a GMO diet late in life.

Furthermore, the Dr. Judy A. Carman study found massive stomach inflammation in commercial pigs fed a GMO diet by examining their stomachs on autopsy after slaughter ("Journal of Organic Systems," Vol 8, No 1. 2013).

It should also be noted that GMO research results from any university accepting bio-corporate money are suspect. Corporations with a stake in biotechnology pour copious amounts of money into university programs.

With millions of dollars at stake, academia that accepts agri-business money cannot be trusted to deliver valid, truthful and unbiased findings.

The columnist correctly states that the anti-GMO information is voluminous. Unfortunately, he neglects to cite any of these studies. I will do so here. Residues of glyphosate are found in GMO soy ("Food Chemistry," Vol 153 pp. 207-215. 2014, T. Bohn et al.). Glyphosate residues are found in humans and animals ("Environmental and Analytical Toxicology," Vol 4, Issue 2. 2014, Monika Kruger et al.). Residues of glyphosate harm human gut bacteria and suppress the cytochrome P450 pathway ("Entropy Journal," Vol 15 (1) 2013, Anthony Samsel and Stephanie Seneff). Huge increase in chronic diseases in the U.S. parallels the advent and use of GMO crops ("Journal of Organic Systems," Vol 9 (2) 2014, Nancy L. Swanson et al.).

Had GMOs appeared commercially in earlier decades when the dangers of DDT were exposed GMOs would have suffered the same fate. They would have been banned. If a more thorough and transparent approach were applied to GMOs today, they might well be banned in the future.

Patricia Michl taught elementary school for 8 years in Ohio. She worked in family support as an attorney for 27 years in Washington. She is currently working part-time as a dryland wheat farmer near Waterville, Wash.

Readers' views

Release Dwight and Steven Hammond

The Hammonds should be home with their families.

74-year-old Dwight and son Steven were/are respected ranchers in the Burns area. They are presently serving a 5-year mandatory sentence for arson on federal land. They were labeled terrorists in order to justify this grossly disproportionate sentence for the destruction (burned) of approximately 130 acres of

Bureau of Land Management pasture.

They stood trial once and served their time. The Department of Justice came back in federal appeals court and won, imposing the 5-year sentence. Double jeopardy is mentioned often as I have read the articles reporting the trial and happenings that led to the final outcome, which to me is a gross miscarriage of justice.

The mandatory 5-year sentence is to discourage terrorists and arsonists who disregard the law. Was this a witch

hunt used to send a message to good solid Americans that dissent? Could be — maybe yes.

The Hammonds have been described in such terms as, respected, great neighbor, salt of the earth ag folks. If this father and son fit the profile of arsonist or terrorist, we are all in trouble.

"Remember this is not about me, this is about our country," were Dwight Hammond's parting comments as he was taken from home and family a year ago.

For goodness sakes, someone has the leverage to

get these men out of prison. Unfortunately for the Hammonds, I think they were caught up in what I refer to as "a virus sweep." Easily labeled as such if you have issues with the BLM and their land management policies.

I'm infuriated to see the pardons and commutations being dished out at this time to drug dealers and terrorists, none seem to be forthcoming for Dwight and Steven.

Bring the Hammonds home.

Wanda Ballard
Baker County, Ore.