



Immigration Insanity

Incompetent lawmakers and a gullible electorate

Why does a sector of our elected political body insist on stopping the \$6 dollar a day worker from entering the U.S. in search of the \$6 an hour job as the way to resolve the illegal immigration issue, instead of stopping the \$6 an hour employer who should be paying \$12 (or more) an hour to American citizens and legal residents?

It sounds kind of, well, dumb, doesn't it? Dumb and really expensive – and to boot, it hasn't worked.

Every year when Congress puts together next year's budget, they announce with great fanfare the importance to our sovereignty and security, which starts with securing our borders – OK, not borders – the border with Mexico. And as is now the practice, every year there is a budget increase for border protection.

Take the 2007 budget. It's to be \$7.8 billion, and just to show us they mean business, they add: "and that is a 9.8 percent increase over 2006." Ooh, they mean business. Except that in 2006 we heard the budget was to be \$6.7 billion which represented a 4.8 percent increase over 2005. And the 2003 budget represented a whopping 33 percent increase over the 2002. And on and on it has gone, year in and year out.

Asa Hutchinson, who headed the INS in 2002 and had announced the 33 percent budget hike, also proudly touted that there had been 500 investigations of companies hiring illegal immigrants, "a major increase" since 2001. Kind of disingenuous, though. Investigations? What about arrests, fines, stopping the practice? Investigations and enforcement are two very different things. In 2001, 141 companies in the U.S. were fined for hiring illegal immigrants, in 2002, only 73 companies were fined. So big deal, 500 investigations. It goes into the abyss of political apathy after that – in 2003, 15 companies were fined. In 2003, in Southern California, home of the largest concentration of illegal immigrants, 13 companies were fined but only one since then.

Naturally we hear some big name dropping like Wal-Mart and Tyson Food. The reason why they make news is not only because of their size, but because they are the exception.

The madness continues. For the 2006 budget, the congressional "stop them at the border" sector had demanded an increase of 2,000 new Border Patrol officers for each of the next five years, so when only 210 were allocated – holy mackerel, they went bananas. For the 2007 budget, an allocation of \$458.9 million is made for 1,500 new Border Patrol agents. From the way lawmakers spend taxpayer money, they may not know how to divide. For the rest of us, that amount represents a cost of \$305,933 per agent per year. The 2000 agents they wanted would have been a mere \$61.8 million per year going to \$1.2 billion in 2007, \$1.8 billion in 2008, \$2.4 billion in 2009, and \$3 billion in 2010, just on that one item.

Presently there are around 11,000 Border Patrol agents. In five years that would make it 21,000. There are 2,000 miles along the U.S.-Mexico border, so that would make it 10.5 agents per mile. That's provided there are no agents along the U.S.-Canada border.

Why worry? Our dear congressional reps tell us we'll build a fence. OK, to save the poor taxpayers' money, let's only build 700 miles of fence. That will be a great savings, and illegal immigrants won't figure out that they can go around or over the fence, thus they will be stopped for a bargain price.

The 2007 budget also includes building the missing link of a triple fence along 14 miles from San Diego's Pacific Ocean running east. The allocation is \$30 million – that makes a mile \$2.142 million. Assume the price holds and is the same for the 700 miles – that comes to \$1.5 billion.

So here is what we wind up with, on one hand: lawmakers who don't know the value of money, haven't the foggiest idea on how to stop illegal immigration, don't want to really upset business interests, and talk tough to get reelected. On the other hand, a large segment of very gullible voters.

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temptation that I read about in my high school study of *The Odyssey* :

Ulysses and his men had to pass the island of the Sirens on their way home from the Trojan War. The song of these enchantresses was so seductive that any sailor who heard it would forget his original course and follow the singing. Their island was littered with the bones of sailors whose efforts to reach them had resulted in shipwrecks.

Ulysses wanted to hear the Sirens without wrecking his ship, so he told his men to tie him firmly to the mast. Meanwhile, he had them stop their ears with beeswax so that they could row past the island without hearing the Siren song. The strategy worked.

We can use the strategy of Ulysses' crew by ignoring all the ads for Whole Foods, and passing by the store without going in. Those who share Ulysses' wish to safely experience temptation can leave their wallets at home if walking, or in their trunk if driving. This will allow them to see the products and eat the

free samples without any danger of impulse shopping. If we follow Ulysses' strategy, we may also survive a seductive, destructive temptation.

Carol McBrian
Eugene

SPEEDY RELIEF

I live in Eugene and I was in Southern India at the M.A. Center (or Amma Center), an international headquarters when the East Asian tsunami struck on Dec. 26, 2004. What I saw changed my ideas about my own capabilities and the meaning of charity.

The more than 1,000 residents of the center swung into immediate action preparing food and all other necessities. I helped as much as I was able, and became aware that many people were working non-stop, with no sleep for days. Each day I would shake my head in disbelief over the quality, quantity and sheer swiftness of aid that was being given.

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