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AP English Language

October 9, 2007

### Illegal Immigration: A Problem of Rising Proportions

Each year, United States borders are “penetrated by some 300,000 illegal aliens” (Francis). This influx results in a total illegal population of nearly 9.3 million, which is more than triple that of 1970: “Even at the peak of the great wave of early 20th century immigration, the number of immigrants living in the United States was less than half what it is today” (Francis). This number continues to grow exponentially because of “anchor babies,” which are “illegal immigrant babies born in the United States that are automatically granted U.S. citizenship” under the Fourteenth Constitutional Amendment (Cosman). Illegal immigrants, whose “anchors” are dropped in America when their children become citizens, fill U.S. schools, take advantage of welfare programs, and pose health and crime risks to the nation, but they contribute little or no tax money to the government. There are several ways to stop illegal immigration, but the best method is to strengthen border security.

“Illegal Aliens” defines an illegal immigrant as “a person who is not a U.S. citizen and who is in the United States in violation of U.S. immigration laws.” This can constitute a person who does not have necessary documentation to enter the country or has fraudulent documentation; it can also describe a person who enters the country legally with temporary documentation, but stays past the allowed time limit (“Illegal Aliens”). These illegal immigrants come from nations across the world, including Canada, China, Japan, and Korea, but the majority of nearly 57 percent come from Mexico (“Illegal Aliens”). Many Mexicans cross

America's Southern border, and "help themselves to job, education, welfare and unemployment compensation" (Hayes).

Illegal immigrants pose immediate danger to America in a variety of ways. They are hazardous to the nation's health because they often carry diseases that are virtually extinct in America, such as "drug-resistant tuberculosis, malaria, leprosy, plague, polio, dengue, and Chagas disease" (Cosman). Immigrants who enter the country illegally are not screened for such diseases, and can therefore be very harmful to the nation's public health. Currently, "66% of all tuberculosis cases coming to America originate in Mexico, the Philippines, and Vietnam" (Cosman). With such dangerous diseases, illegal immigrants take a toll on the American health care system. An overwhelming amount of illegal aliens take advantage of welfare benefits like Medicaid and other free services: "Several California hospitals have gone bankrupt providing free health care to illegal aliens.... Eighty-four California hospitals are closing their doors" (Cosman). If such trends continue, the health care system will be ruined for all Americans.

In areas where many illegal immigrants have settled, the influx has resulted in an elevated crime rate. This, like illegal alien health risks, poses danger to the American public. In recent years, areas along the nation's Southern border have seen a drastic increase in crime. Operation Predator was initiated in 2003 to convict sexual predators. By 2005, the operation had resulted in nearly 5,000 arrests; eighty-five percent of those arrested were illegal immigrants ("Illegal Aliens"). Because of the lack of border security, convicted criminals, terrorists, and drug smugglers are constantly entering the country, and subjecting U.S. citizens to harm.

While both health and crime are problems with illegal immigration, the underlying issue is money. Each year, the government spends billions of dollars on illegal immigrants. Among these costs are "2.5 billion dollars on Medicaid, 2.2 billion dollars on treatment for the

uninsured, 1.9 billion dollars on food assistance programs, 1.6 billion dollars on the federal prison and court systems, and 1.4 billion dollars on federal aid to schools” (“The Cost of Immigration”). In 2002, the Center for Immigration Studies reported that “American households headed by illegal immigrants used \$26.3 billion in government services during 2002, but paid only \$16 billion in taxes” (“The Cost of Immigration”). Therefore, U.S. taxpayers pay over \$10 billion each year for services provided to the nation’s illegal immigrants.

Illegal immigration is a growing problem in the United States. There are numerous solutions, including revocation of automatic citizenship for anchor babies, punishment of those who help illegal aliens, and an end to granting amnesty (Cosman). However, the most plausible and effective way to stop the influx of illegal aliens is to tighten border security by means of a border fence. This strategy “calls for prevention through deterrence, that is, elevating the risk of apprehension to a level so high that prospective illegal entrants would consider it futile to attempt to enter the U.S. illegally” (“U.S. Border Patrol”). By increasing security and implementing a fence to seal the nation’s Northern and Southern borders, immigrants will be encouraged to enter the country legally.

A number of small scale border security projects have proven that “prevention through deterrence” is an efficient way to halt illegal immigration. In 1994, “Attorney General Janet Reno and Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner Doris Meissner announced an innovative, multi-year strategy to... disrupt the traditional illegal immigration corridors along the nation’s Southwest border” (“U.S. Border Patrol”). This initiative targeted areas that were most vulnerable to invasion of illegal aliens from Mexico, and the results have been staggering: “Considerable success has been achieved in restoring integrity and safety to the Southwest border by implementing the strategy through... operations, such as Operation Gatekeeper in San

Diego, California, Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, Texas, Operation Rio Grande in McAllen, Texas, and Operation Safeguard in Tucson, Arizona” (“U.S. Border Patrol”). Each operation has proven on a small scale that a nation-wide border security program would drastically decrease illegal immigration.

In “U.S. Border Patrol Strategies Help Prevent Illegal Immigration,” Operation Gatekeeper is examined. The journal states that the California operation focused on five miles of heavily trafficked border on Imperial Beach and 66 miles of border between San Diego and Mexico. The prevention by deterrence strategy proved to be effective; increased security kept illegal aliens away, and in 2001, San Diego reached a 28-year low in apprehensions. Because of the drastic results, the operation expanded to the El Centro area, and the apprehensions “climbed to more than 226,580 in 1998, an increase of 55% over 1997” (“U.S. Border Patrol”). While this portion of the operation saw an initial spike in apprehensions, the deterrence was expected to take effect in a matter of years, and apprehensions would decline drastically.

Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, Texas produced results similar to those of Operation Gatekeeper. The initiative “produced a 50% decline in apprehensions from 1993 to 1996” (“U.S. Border Patrol”). Operation Rio Grande was implemented to expand the success of Operation Hold the Line, and “in 1998 apprehensions decreased by 35% ... from the last fiscal year” (U.S. Border Patrol). This operation also proved that border security could “improve the quality of life in border communities by contributing to falling crime rates.... Both Brownsville and Laredo reported a drop in criminal activity during 1998, with the crime rate falling by more than twenty percent in Brownsville alone” (“U.S. Border Patrol”). Small-scale border security initiatives in the Southwest have proven that by tightening its borders, America can put and end to the dangers of illegal immigration.

Existing border security projects have improved surrounding areas, but since the security systems do not span the entire border, illegal aliens are still able to enter the country. Because the security projects have focused solely on the Southwestern border, the Northern border remains open for people to cross freely. This open border is a source of danger because it allows criminals, terrorists, and drug smugglers enter the country. The United States must stop this practice by implementing border fences and security systems that span seamlessly across both the 1,940-mile-long border with Mexico and the nearly 4,000-mile-long border with Canada (Cosman). These systems must be equipped with sufficient technology to stop intruders, including “infrared scopes, night-vision goggles, underground sensors, and IDENT (an automated fingerprint identification system) terminals” (“U.S. Border Patrol”). Such devices have proven effective in catching illegal aliens who attempt to cross the borders at night, in rural areas, or with fraudulent documentation.

Duncan Hunter, a Republican Congressman from San Diego who supports the implementation of a national border fence, states "This is no longer an immigration issue.... This is a national security issue." (“U.S.-Mexico Border Fence”). America’s open borders are a great risk. They allow an unprecedented amount of illegal aliens to enter the country and reap all of its benefits, while paying little or no tax. These illegal immigrants pose a threat to America’s health, safety, and national budget. The most effective way to stop this trend and protect America’s safety is to tighten border security and implement a national border fence.

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