

President's Letter
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There has been much talk of building border fences and walls lately. The term “beautiful wall” seems to be an oxymoron, when one considers that governments build walls and impose policed barriers in desperation, when a sense of power slipping away becomes almost palpable. Walls are built when governments fail to implement and enforce sensible and fair laws to deal with the economic issues surrounding immigration, taxation, labor, and eligibility for social programs. Construction of barriers allows those in power on both sides to control the keys to open and close the “beautiful gates” and to thereby control and direct the movement of goods, commodities and people back and forth. The wall is symbolic of a lack of freedom and an impediment to free trade. The barbed wire on top of any wall can be out-ripped in both directions and this is even more troubling, especially when there is talk of government “punishing” and “prosecuting” not only the U.S. businesses choosing to relocate so that they can remain competitive in a world market, but also the U.S. business owners who need to remain here and continue to hire unskilled labor within our borders.

After WWII during the early days of the cold war, Berlin was a portal through which thousands of East Germans fled to the west. Dynamic aspiring people voted with their feet, fleeing to escape the oppression and lack of opportunity that characterized the east. Almost overnight, on August 13, 1961, the East German communists in power erected a barbed wire and concrete wall to stop the exodus of educated freedom-seeking people and the ambition, work ethic and economic activity that they had continued to take with them. In order to put a positive spin on the wall that demarcated prosperity from the failure of communism, the wall was labeled the “Anti-Fascist Protective Rampart” and its stated purpose was to prevent enemies from gaining access to the East.

The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989. By this time, the economies of the Republics within the Soviet Union were in shambles. Government housing was in disrepair. Food lines and dirty under-stocked stores were the norm. Automobiles and appliances were scarce and shoddy. The standard of living of the people trapped under this massive government web was dismally low. Rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide and violence were notably elevated. Little wealth had been produced over the years and the longer the regime persisted, the poorer the people and the regime itself became.

In an article written by Ryan McMaken in 2014, reference is made to the 1920 writings of economist Ludwig Von Mises when he wrote that “socialism suffered from an incentive problem.” Everyone was supposed to produce according to their ability, but to receive only according to their needs. The “famous question” becomes, “Who, under socialism, will take out the garbage? That is, what will be the incentive to do the grubby jobs, and furthermore, to do them well?...”

Almost a hundred years later, we find ourselves asking the same questions. Millions of Americans, unknown numbers of undocumented persons and multitudes of legal immigrants and their dependents are currently accepting assistance and choosing welfare over work, enrolling in a host of taxpayer funded programs that actually punish working and favor not working. Which American citizens will actually willingly make themselves available to perform “America’s Dirtiest Jobs” and turn down the “free stuff” so that they can receive a net gain after taxes of “zero?”

Who will perform the housekeeping jobs in hotels and motels, cleaning bathrooms, dumping trash and doing laundry? Who will work on a landscaping and yard care crew in 100-degree weather, or on a parking lot snow removal crew in sub-zero weather? Who will stand all day in a hot kitchen to fry the eggs and flip the burgers in thousands of small restaurants across the country? Who will frame the new houses and commercial buildings and who will haul heavy 4x12 sheets of drywall and hang hundreds of them on high ceilings and wide walls? Who will tape and finish and texture? Who will set forms, pour concrete or mix 80# bags of mortar and lay the bricks? Who will work in a saw mill or on a fishing vessel or on a remote gas and oil rig for 12 hours straight for long weeks at a time? Agricultural employers face unique challenges in staffing their farms and processing plants. Many agricultural jobs are ongoing, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and employers involved in animal agriculture are always held responsible for the proper care and feeding of their animals. Unlike government workers, farm animals never take the night off, holidays off or long weekends off. If all undocumented workers were to be deported, who will be available to help feed the pigs, the chickens and the baby calves? Who will haul manure when it piles up and who will irrigate the fields all night long if necessary? Who will get up at the crack of dawn each day and milk the cows, feed the cows, breed the cows, deliver the calves, clean the milk tanks, and take some pride in the quality of the milk that is marketed? Even at wages of \$10-\$15 per hour, it is still very difficult to find enough citizen workers who want to make this kind of effort to earn a living and provide for the needs of themselves and their families.

Some farmers raise labor intensive fruits and vegetables and the timing of harvesting is crucial to the quality of the produce and the profitability of the crop. Weather is a huge variable and currently, so is labor. If undocumented workers flee the federal government and not enough seasonal work visas are issued in an efficient and timely manner, who will climb the ladders to pick the peaches, apples, and cherries, and who will bend over and crouch down all day to pick the blueberries, strawberries, melons and chilies?

Many agricultural commodities are not priced by the seller, but priced according to complex government derived formulas. Commodity farmers and dairymen cannot arbitrarily raise the prices they receive for their corn, soybeans or raw milk. Therefore, if production costs or inputs such as labor go up drastically, or if adequate labor cannot be found, many producers will be forced out of business, and this will most certainly drive up food costs for American consumers.

The term, "Deportation Force," is striking fear in the hearts of many workers and employers. The results of turning federal agents loose to raid homes and businesses will be total chaos and economic suicide for this country. If farms, processing plants or slaughterhouses are raided, or if workers are too frightened to come to work, animal suffering will most certainly ensue. When fearful employees and distressed employers are thrown together with armed, heavy handed federal agents in a stressful situation on private property, tragic outcomes could easily result.

All of us are affected by what is happening in agriculture and we should all be very concerned about the dilemma that is being dropped upon us by the decades-long refusal of the federal government to competently and efficiently deal with the immigration and border crisis. This is a problem that has been passed off like a hot potato from one administration to the next. Ultimately, mishandling of this crisis will cause more damage than ignoring it. An overly aggressive, insensitive approach will damage the entire economy and will make the food supply of our nation as scarce as it is in Venezuela these days. We should all be very concerned about this issue because, in the words of New Mexico State Legislator, Candy Ezzell, "If you eat, you are involved in agriculture!"

Please contact each member of your Federal Delegation and make them understand how important this issue is to the future of our country. Let them know that we urgently need to establish a worker visa card system and we need to require that every undocumented adult currently living in our country obtain one of these cards so that they can be allowed to work legally and support themselves and their families while they are in this country.

The process to procure a worker visa card should be easy, friendly and non-intimidating. No punishments or "back taxes" should be imposed. A worker visa card would not be associated with citizenship and would make the holders and their dependents ineligible for taxpayer funded social programs. It would emphasize the requirement that those wishing to continue to peacefully live and work here must assume personal responsibility as a result of their making that choice.

Background checks could be done on all applicants and this would avoid the issuance of cards to criminals. The cards would need to contain mistake-proof identity features. A "point of work" graduated income tax rate could be applied, directly linked to total income earned. Tax liabilities for workers on a visa should be exactly equal to the combined rates that our own citizens are forced to pay for Social Security, Medicare and state and federal income taxes at each level of income. The only thing that an employer should be required to do upon hiring a non-citizen worker would be to swipe the worker visa card to activate it. The worker visa tax could be submitted right along with all other federal taxes due from employers on each pay day. Workers on a visa should not have to file income taxes due to the automatic deductions being made prior to issuance of each paycheck. This will ensure compliance and will effectively place visa workers and U.S. citizens on the same level playing field.

We should try to learn from history so that we don't keep making the same mistakes that have caused so much human suffering in the past. Working immigrants built this great country, but the continued forcing of working Americans to receive and support multitudes of non-working immigrants will destroy this country.