

Most 'illegals' are here to stay

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We are not sure how it would help the United States to see the exodus of millions of taxpayers with homes, cars, children and jobs. Yet, the hope for a mass exodus of people who fit that description is part of what inspired new immigration-enforcement laws in Arizona, Utah, Oklahoma, Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama.

Best estimates say that roughly 11 million residents of the United States live here illegally. Some came here by getting away with misdemeanor border crossings. Others overstayed visas. Regardless, illegal residency is not a crime. It is a non-criminal, civil dispute with government.

Forceful deportation of 11 million residents would far exceed the limitations of federal resources, which few dispute. So, authors and advocates of new state immigration-enforcement laws have devised a concept known as "self-deportation," or "attrition through enforcement." They believe that by relentlessly checking immigration status, and by increasing the risks and consequences of staying in this country, immigrants will simply go back home.

News in the past week may lead some to believe in this concept, as the Pew Hispanic Center reported that the number of Mexicans entering the United States today equals the number who leave. Based on the Pew numbers, net immigration has reached zero. This is an economic indicator that should disturb us. When immigrants lose interest in our country, it means they have lost hope in our economy. The United States is no longer attractive to them. If our country were a business, management would be in panic mode and scurrying to re-inspire demand.

Another report, from the Immigration Policy Center, reveals that three-fifths of illegal immigrants have been in this country for more than a decade and most are not going anywhere. Neither are the unauthorized parents of 4.5 million Americans who were born in this country to illegal immigrants.

The report explains that illegal residents tolerate extraordinary amounts of risk before they simply walk away from substantial, long-term investments they have made here. Thirty-five percent of illegal immigrants own homes. The median household income of illegal immigrants is \$35,000, and 8.3 million have jobs. Each year, illegal immigrants produce 340,000 new Americans. Nearly 80 percent of children living with illegal immigrants are American citizens. About 40 percent of illegal immigrants are parents of citizens.

Numbers tell us that most long-term illegal immigrants are doing well. They buy homes and produce wealth. Most importantly, they generate new Americans at a rate just high enough to save us from a demographic crisis in which too few children are born to sustain the economy when larger generations retire and become dependent on younger generations. Social Security and most other pensions are funded by working generations, not by the retirees who live off of the proceeds. Demographic failure and economic collapse go hand-in-hand.

Long-term illegal immigrants are not self-deporting for the very reasons we should be glad they are here: They are succeeding by producing more than they consume. If they self-deport in droves, we will suffer and beg them to return. Be glad those new state immigration laws are not working as intended.

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