

BUSH'S FRACTURED FAIRY TALE. PRESIDENT THINKS HE HAS MAGIC RECIPE, BUT A REFUSAL TO ENFORCE EXISTING LAWS SHOULD MAKE BILL DISAPPEAR

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Body

When **President Bush** emerged from his meeting with Senate Republicans yesterday, the flushed, harried look on his face suggested he hadn't made much progress on immigration. That's not surprising if his argument inside was no better than the snippy speech he made afterward.

"The status quo is unacceptable," he said to reporters. "We've got to convince the American people that this **bill** is the best way to **enforce** the border."

Hey, while you're doing **magic** tricks, why not convince the American people things are going great in Iraq, too?

Baloney is on sale in Washington, and **Bush** is the Butcher-in-Chief. Who is to blame for the "unacceptable" status quo other than the man who has been **President** for 6 1/2 years? As for the notion that what he really wants to do is **enforce** border **laws**, what's stopping him? There are already plenty of **laws** against entering the country illegally and fining employers who hire such workers.

The first **President** to hold an MBA is giving management a bad name. That he is, post 9/11, MIA in shutting the border is malpractice on a grand scale.

That **Bush** won't **enforce** the most basic security measures - your identity must be certain and you need a visa to enter the United States and authorization to work - is why the immigration **bill** that died last week should rest in peace. **Bush** called it "comprehensive," but that just means that different aspects would satisfy different special-interest groups. Instead of solving problems, it would sprinkle **fairy** dust and declare them solved.

The heart of the bad **bill** was a series of logistical requirements that would overwhelm the already chaotic system. Background checks for 12 million illegal immigrants would likely become a rubber-stamp factory, if enough rubber stamps could be found. The requirement that all illegal immigrants pay back taxes would yield a bumper crop of phony documents. And the requirement that all 12 million learn English and that nearly all pay hefty fees and fines and go home before becoming legal would be impractical and unenforceable.

Just last week the administration suspended new passport requirements adopted in January. Their offices swamped with backlogs and long lines, the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security temporarily waived the rule that U.**S.** citizens entering the country from Mexico, Canada, Bermuda and the

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Caribbean had to have passports. These are the same people who would be conducting background checks on illegal immigrants to make sure none are terrorists or criminals.

The fundamental issue is not immigration - it's trust. Most Americans simply don't believe the government will do what it says it will. Who can blame them? The same promises of one-time forgiveness and strict enforcement going forward were at the heart of the last immigration "reform" in 1986. Then, 3 million immigrants got amnesty. Twenty years later, we only have a bigger mess.

Of course, nothing happens in Washington without a heaping helping of hypocrisy. It is bizarre that Democrats like Ted Kennedy are Bush's partners on immigration even as the vast majority of Republican senators oppose it. The same Democrats who say Bush lied to the nation about Iraq and screwed up the management of the war now say he can manage the logistics of the new immigration bill. No wonder congressional approval ratings are in the toilet, along with Bush's. They deserve each other.

Yes, immigration is a mess, but a new law isn't always the answer. Sometimes you just need to enforce the laws you have. This is one of those times. If existing laws are enforced consistently and fairly, and the border is sealed, the problem of what to do about those already here will gradually shrink to a more manageable number. Then we can have a debate that produces more than false promises and strange bedfellows.

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Graphic

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