

## **HOT ISSUE BURNS WILSON ; CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR HIRED ILLEGAL ALIEN, FAILETO PAY TAX**

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

May 5, 1995, Friday, FIVE STAR LIFT Edition

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**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 8A

**Length:** 381 words

**Dateline:** WASHINGTON

### **Body**

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When hiring an illegal alien became an issue in someone else's campaign last year, California Gov. Pete Wilson said the law required that the offender "suffer a penalty."

Now, the man who helped make illegal immigration a national issue has to wonder whether his own record in that area will damage his presidential prospects.

Wilson acknowledged Wednesday that in 1978, when he was San Diego mayor, he employed an undocumented Mexican immigrant as a housekeeper and did not pay required Social Security taxes. Wilson said he did not know at the time that the woman was in the United States illegally or that proper taxes were not being paid. Betty Hosie, who was then Wilson's wife, backs him up, saying she was responsible for household affairs.

Wilson's advisers said Thursday that it was no big deal, that no laws were broken. It was not a violation of federal law back then to hire an illegal immigrant, and it would have been a violation of California law only if Wilson knew of the woman's status.

Still, as Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., said, "There is a certain irony here." Wilson's aides could not dispute that but had to hope that Boxer was wrong in her conclusion that "it won't be lost on the people of the country."

Wilson has benefited from immigration politics, complaining often about illegal immigrants and the failure of the federal government to pay the associated costs.

California's Proposition 187 against illegal immigration was the centerpiece of his successful re-election campaign, and Wilson had promised to raise the issue of illegal immigration again in his bid for the GOP presidential nomination.

The camps of two of Wilson's rivals for the nomination left little doubt Thursday that they would make an issue of the episode. "Pete Wilson has made a career out of saying one thing and doing another," said Mark Merritt, a spokesman for former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander.

Alex Castellanos, a strategist for Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, said, "Live by illegal aliens, die by illegal aliens."

Craig Fuller, Wilson's campaign chairman, chalked up the attacks to politics and said, "We believe that it will have no lasting effect on our campaign's success."

But some GOP officials said the disclosure had to hurt Wilson's chances.

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## Graphic

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PHOTO; Photo Headshot - Gov. Pete Wilson

## Classification

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**Language:** English

**Subject:** ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); IMMIGRATION (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (87%); HEADS OF GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (87%); TAXES & TAXATION (74%); MIGRATION ISSUES (73%); FOREIGN LABOR (73%); US STATE IMMIGRATION LAW (73%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (72%); ELECTIONS (72%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (72%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (72%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (71%); SOCIAL SECURITY (70%); US SOCIAL SECURITY (70%); POLITICS (64%)

**Person:** LAMAR ALEXANDER (52%); BARBARA BOXER (52%)

**Geographic:** SAN DIEGO, CA, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (93%); UNITED STATES (79%)

**Load-Date:** May 6, 1995