

Approach immigration issue with creativity

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Body

Immigration is a divisive topic among Americans. We seem to forget completely that we are a nation of immigrants; that immigrants, legal or otherwise, come here for a better life; and that we are all people, regardless of color, race or nationality. Men have migrated everywhere since the beginning of time, mainly to improve their families' lot.

To say that illegal immigrants come to America only to break our laws, take unfair advantage of the system so they can have medical attention, drive recklessly on our roads or live boisterous lives in our communities is pretty myopic and misses the big picture. The sum of our complaints won't solve the problem.

We're living in a pivotal moment and facing one of our greatest challenges. Immigrants -- illegal or legal -- will keep coming whether we like it or not, regardless of state and federal measures that are adopted. I am sure we can find better uses for our tax dollars to make this illegal **immigration** problem work for us, not against us.

Instead of getting all riled up and complaining, we could be more proactive, creative and positive about this challenge, regardless of our party affiliation, our religion, national origin or color of our skin.

Fellow Americans, our reputation in the world neighborhood is at an all-time low. What can we do to turn this illegal **immigration issue** on its head and make it work for us?

This is our chance to make America even greater, with courage, ingenuity and **creativity**.

Mario Chavez

Carlsbad, Calif.

Toll of illegal influx

To those whose hearts bleed with sympathy for these so-called decent, hard-working undocumented workers who come here only for a better life, I'd like to ask you a few questions:

*What do you say to the janitor who cleans your office building and who wants a better life? He has seen his income decrease markedly because his employer is competing with firms that hire illegal aliens. He had hoped to go to school to train for a better job, but now he just hopes to keep the dead-end job he has.

*What do you say to the father whose daughter contracted tuberculosis from an illegal alien? Illegal aliens aren't screened for diseases the way legal immigrants are.

*What do you say to the mother whose son died because he was in an accident, and the local emergency room had run out of money and closed? Illegal aliens use the ERs of this country as primary care facilities and rarely pay their bills.

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The questions could go on, but one thing is clear: Every citizen and legal immigrant pays the price for illegal immigration. When is this madness going to stop?

Stuart Jones

Lynchburg, Va.

Turned away by system

I am a white, middle-class, 63-year-old Englishman who retired as a London police officer 12 years ago. As a committed lover of America and Americans, I thought I might be able to spend some of my retirement in the USA.

At the time of my retirement, prospective immigrants could enter a "green card lottery" that was open to world citizens. My wife, also a retired police officer, and I entered the lottery without realizing that because we are English, neither of us really had a chance of being chosen. Later I found out that, in the interest of "diversity," you really needed to come from more obscure regions of the world.

However, a friend of a friend who is Irish was given a green card almost immediately. He has since been arrested twice for drug violations and once for driving under the influence.

My wife and I would have come to the United States as model citizens with an income from pensions; we would not have needed any welfare benefits. Indeed, the idea was to bring money into the states and purchase a property with cash. We would not have plotted against the state and would have willingly trained with a view to gaining citizenship.

Now we're resigned to just visiting our holiday home in Florida and experiencing America in short bursts. When I think about the fact that foreign plotters who attacked the World Trade Center were welcomed with nearly open arms, as a Yankophile (if that's the word), I am very Englishly miffed.

Jim Havell

West Sussex, England

What about rule of law?

A distinction needs to be made between legal and illegal immigration. Legal immigration is an essential part of what has made and will continue to make America the great country it is.

Illegal immigration is a disgrace that needs to be addressed, or we will be admitting that the rule of law is no longer supreme in the United States. Illegal aliens are not immigrants, and they are undermining our tax system, our health system and our education system by not paying taxes or medical bills.

Francis Cannon

Los Angeles

Dial down emotions

In discussing illegal immigrants, I would like to see people deal with facts and not emotions. The millions of illegal immigrants here are not going to be deported. Most have zero chance of getting into this country legally with all of the requirements for permanent residency.

Illegal immigrants would not come here if there were not jobs waiting for them -- mostly jobs that no American wants to do, even if the pay were a little better. The vast majority of them are hard-working, productive members of society. As our population ages, we will need their labor more.

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Are there immigrant **issues** that need to be resolved relating to health care, education and the environment along the border areas? Absolutely. So let's work on them and come up with real solutions instead of rhetoric. My sneaking suspicion is that if the skin color of most of these immigrants were white, the uproar against them would not be as loud.

Bill Cusack

Dallas

Voices of **immigration**

Are you feeling the impact of **immigration**? What is life like for an illegal immigrant living in the USA, and for others in the communities where he or she works and lives? We're interested in hearing your experiences. Send comments to editor@usatoday.com or fax to 703-854-2053. Please include your contact number, city and state for verification purposes. Comments will be considered for an ongoing conversation in letters and online.

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