

## **Schwarzenegger warns GOP against exploiting immigration concerns**

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### **Body**

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Republicans love to talk about immigrants.

Rudy Giuliani has promised to end illegal immigration in three years. Mike Huckabee has a plan that calls for 12 million illegal immigrants to leave the country in 120 days. And Mitt Romney says things that please restrictionists, and yet many can't figure out if he believes what he says.

Now for real insight, let's turn to a Republican who is also an immigrant. With the California primary approaching on Feb. 5, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has advice for Republican presidential hopefuls who intend to come to the Golden State and exploit the immigration issue: Don't.

During a recent meeting with the editorial board of the San Diego Union-Tribune, I asked the governor, who hasn't endorsed any of the candidates for the upcoming primary, what advice he'd give them. Specifically, I wanted to know what he thought about how some have been using the immigration issue to scare up votes.

"In a way, I understand why they're doing it," he said, "because when it comes to close elections, it's all about winning. It's not about sending a good message."

Schwarzenegger understands immigration better than just about any elected official in the country, from a policy perspective and a personal one. And he has a lot to say.

About the possibility that California might grant driver's licenses to illegal immigrants: "It'll never happen. It'll never get past me because I made it very clear that we have to have immigration reform" first and not address the problem piecemeal.

About the fact that foreign workers have become a permanent part of the American economy: "We have our domestic workers . . . but we fall short of the workers (we need) on the farms, and in construction and other places."

About what that should mean for immigration reform: "We should have the right for companies to go outside of the state, outside of the country . . . and find those workers and bring them in on temporary worker permits."

That's the policy part of Schwarzenegger. I then asked the governor about whether there wouldn't still be some people upset that these immigrants were here - legally or not - because of the impact on the culture. At that point, things got personal.

"I would say that there would always be a problem," he said. "There is always a certain percentage of people who just don't like foreigners. But that's OK. That's not the problem that we have right now. The problem we have right now is that, every single day, you hear about illegals, people coming in here illegally." That creates hostility, he said. Yet, unlike the nativists, Schwarzenegger doesn't blame the immigrants themselves. Contrary to the popular

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myth that illegal immigrants cut in line, the governor realizes that there is no line - not if you're poor and from a country where the number of people who want to come to the United States far exceeds the visa allotment.

"Those people didn't choose (to come illegally)," he said. "It's the only way they can get in here. It's not like you can stand in line and wait a few days and then you can get in. There's no way. There is a system that has been created on purpose to look the other way and to bring them in because everyone knows that we cannot function without them."

That dependence creates more hostility. **Schwarzenegger** encountered some of that himself when he came to California more than 30 years ago, but not to the degree he sees it today.

"I felt it a little bit in my own case," he said. "I felt a little bit of prejudice, people saying 'What's the Nazi doing here?' and stuff like that. They imitated my accent, and made jokes about it, and they came into the gym sometimes and said, 'Heil Hitler'."

And so, he said, foreigners have to be aware that xenophobia is out there. Government has the duty to devise a reasonable policy, he said. But newcomers can also ease tensions by assimilating and "infiltrating into the American society."

**Schwarzenegger** knows **immigration**. And it's a shame that, because of an outmoded provision in the Constitution prohibiting anyone born on foreign soil from running for president, he can't enter the race and put what he knows to good use in this campaign - and for the good of the entire country.

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