

## IMMIGRATION VOTE:

### U.S. House coddles CEOs as it kicks the kids

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## **Body**

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San Francisco a I can see the argument behind the 257-to-163 vote in the House last week to allow states to deny illegal immigrant children a public-school education. Government shouldn't reward families that violate America's immigration laws with free schooling.

That said, this Republican House ought to be paddled for passing the above amendment while voting against requiring employers to verify with immigration authorities that each job applicant is legal. If the day should come when the government has to deny children access to an education, so be it. But surely that day cannot have arrived if Congress a the Senate abandoned tough employer penalties earlier a doesn't feel a need to ensure that employers obey the law. Instead, the House passed a voluntary a read namby-pamby a verification bill. (Verification, but only for the law-abiding: Hey, what a concept.)

Once again, Congress is talking tough and legislating light. If this do-nothing bill ever is signed into law, it will change little.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, America's premier immigration limitation group, was so disgusted with what the Republicans and Democrats did last week that it withdrew its support for the two major bills in Congress.

"They decided to get tough with school kids before they got tough with employers, which is where they really need to start," FAIR spokesman Ira Mehlman explained. "We need to cut up the magnet of public services, but the real magnet is jobs, and we've got to deal with that. The only way to do that is to have a mandatory verification process. Without that, nothing else is going to work."

Roy Beck, author of "The Case Against Immigration," supports the no- school amendment and still is disgusted with the House measure. "The members of the House basically turned their backs on the American people," said Beck.

Republicans are hoping that voters will be gullible enough to believe that at least the GOP tried to do something about immigration.

Don't believe it. The courts would stop the no-school provision in a heartbeat and tie it up for years.

If you asked the GOP House whom it cared about more, corporations or constituents, you couldn't have gotten a clearer answer. The anti- verification vote was a vote for cheap labor and feckless enforcement of employment laws.

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President Bill Clinton and other corporate lapdog Democrats are no better. Clinton, having endorsed the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform's call to limit legal immigration, folded last week when he supported efforts to end a proposed limit a then said he still supports limiting legal immigration. Can you believe this guy?

Debra Saunders is a columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle. Her column appears occasionally.

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