

The Overlooked Value of Immigrants

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Body

As a child and grandchild of immigrants from Europe, I was disturbed by columnist Marc Fisher's description of a "stampede" of bills in the Virginia legislature that are targeting undocumented immigrants [Metro, Jan. 31].

Setting aside the obvious irony, that all of the original settlers in the commonwealth were undocumented immigrants, I wonder why folks don't understand the value of these low-paid workers, who help raise our crops, work on chicken farms, pack seafood, build our roads and houses, and raise our children while their parents are at work earning enough to help pay our overpriced mortgages.

If these low-wage workers depart, I see a future of more imported fruits, vegetables and canned goods because local farmers won't have the laborers they need to bring in their crops. We know that this is the worst possible way to supply our needs -- the petroleum reserves required to ship in foreign food are diminishing, and the amount of pollution created so we can eat strawberries from Chile, for example, gives one pause.

These immigrant workers are our best resource at home: They pay taxes, buy cars and houses, rent apartments, and so on, contributing to our economy while enabling us to eat locally grown foods. Let legislators in Virginia and all over our nation think more carefully before jumping on the bandwagon to bar undocumented workers from becoming citizens.

And as for the resolution introduced by Sen. Ken Cuccinelli II (R-Fairfax), which would ask Congress to seek a change to the 14th Amendment so that any child born in the United States would not be automatically a citizen? That is shameful.

CHRISTEL STEVENS

University Park

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