

The GOP's immigration incoherence

The Washington Post

August 28, 2012 Tuesday, Every Edition

Copyright 2012 Washingtonpost.Newsweek Interactive Company, LLC d/b/a Washington Post Digital All Rights Reserved



Distribution: Every Zone

Section: EDITORIAL COPY; Pg. A14

Length: 495 words

Byline: Editorial Board

Body

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY'S [incoherence on illegal immigration](#) was on vivid display last week in Tampa, where delegates gathered to draft their party's official platform.

The platform amounts to a declaration of war on the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country. It embraces laws like those in [Arizona](#) and [Alabama](#) that are intended to make life so miserable for undocumented workers that they will "self-deport," in Mitt Romney's memorable phrase, and it slams the Obama administration for trying to block those measures. The Republican Party would punish cities that look the other way on [immigration](#) enforcement and universities that grant in-state tuition rates to undocumented students, in both cases by withholding federal funds.

In addition, the party of free enterprise and small government would force every employer in the country - in many cases against its will - to electronically verify the [immigration](#) status of job applicants. At a time when illegal border-crossing from Mexico is at a 40-year low, the GOP would complete the 2,000-mile border fence, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.

On the other hand, the GOP platform tips its hat to reality by recognizing that the nation needs low-skilled labor and that there is no adequate legal mechanism to supply it. It therefore calls for a guest-worker program.

But how does it make sense to embrace such a program while pressing to deport 11 million immigrants, most of whom have been in this country for more than a decade and in many cases are integral parts of American communities and parents of American citizens? The whole thing amounts to both an acknowledgment that the job market demands low-wage immigrant workers and a rejection of those who came to this country precisely in response to that demand.

To grasp the full absurdity of the **GOP's** position, suppose for a moment that the party actually carried out its threat to drive out 11 million illegal immigrants, including 7 million in the job force. Imagine the scope, cost and administrative complexity of the guest-worker program that would then be required to replace them. It's hard to conceive of a more wide-ranging expansion of government.

The GOP's immigration incoherence

The **GOP's** contradictions on **immigration** have been evident for a number of years. In 2000, the party platform called for expanding the migrant-farm-workers program. In 2004, bowing to President George W. Bush's support for legalizing millions of undocumented immigrants, the party backed a program that would allow migrants to "come out of the shadows and to participate legally in America's economy" - if only temporarily. Then in 2008, hard-liners slammed the door shut again, pushing through [an enforcement-only platform](#).

Perhaps this year's GOP platform should count as a step forward, for recognizing the market demand for low-skilled labor. But by refusing to devise any alternative to deportation for the undocumented immigrants already here, the party remains in thrall to extremists.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: **IMMIGRATION** (92%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); POLITICAL PARTIES (90%); **IMMIGRATION** LAW (90%); FOREIGN LABOR (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (89%); PLATFORMS & ISSUES (89%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (78%); US POLITICAL PARTIES (78%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (77%); FARM LABOR (77%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2012 (76%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008 (76%); BORDER CONTROL (75%); TUITION FEES (75%); LABOR SECTOR PERFORMANCE (74%); WAGES & SALARIES (71%); US PRESIDENTS (71%); OUTPUT & DEMAND (70%); EMPLOYMENT SEARCH (69%)

Industry: FARM LABOR (77%)

Person: MITT ROMNEY (79%); BARACK OBAMA (58%); GEORGE W BUSH (57%)

Geographic: TAMPA, FL, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (94%)

Load-Date: August 28, 2012