

Nothing to Fear in Immigration Legislation

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Body

To the Editor:

Tens of thousands of illegal immigrants have entered this country by destroying fraudulent travel documents, claiming asylum and never showing up for hearings. The anti terrorism law, effective Nov. 1, will end this practice by requiring an expedited review of asylum claims at the port of entry.

This procedure is a common-sense balance between securing our borders and protecting asylum seekers. For Anthony Lewis (column, Sept. 23), no such balance is necessary. But he should consider that many illegal immigrants arriving at airports receive false documents from organized crime syndicates.

Expedited removal of illegal immigrants protects legitimate refugees. The immigration bill now nearing completion in Congress would modify the new expedited review provision. Applicants must establish only a significant possibility that they will be eligible for asylum. Initial interviews will be conducted by full-time asylum officers or people with identical training. Immigration judges, who will review denied claims, are independent from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The only people with anything to fear from this legislation are those who might wish to abuse our immigration loopholes.

The bill does not eliminate judicial review of I.N.S. practices. Any individual immigrant may still sue the agency and obtain specific relief, but broad class-action suits, brought mostly on behalf of illegal immigrants, will be curtailed. Immigration lawyers have used such suits to accomplish what they cannot accomplish through legislation or regulations.

We hear an awful lot about "anti-immigrant hysteria." Perhaps it is time for critics to confess to "anti-immigration reform hysteria."

(Rep.) LAMAR SMITH

Washington, Sept. 23, 1996

Chairman, Subcommittee

on Immigration and Claims

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