

# CONVERSATIONS

## Illegal immigration exposes security gaps

According to Rakesh Kohli with the Pew Hispanic Center, 80 percent of immigrants entering the United States from Mexico are illegal. That highlights the frustration of many Hoosiers regarding the federal government's constitutional performance as Washington continues to claim tougher border enforcement. The much-anticipated summer study committee on illegal immigration began its work this month.

Law professors told us how immigration policy is strictly in the domain of the feds. Demographic experts told us that Indiana is becoming an "emerging Hispanic state" and that the vast majority of illegal immigrants living in Indiana enter through Mexico. A longtime Hoosier patriot of Mexican descent defended the value of "undocumented workers" to the diversity and economic vitality of Indiana.

What's lost in the discussion is the rule of law and the immediate national security threat to our state and nation from not knowing who is in our country and for what purpose. In 1986, President Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act giving amnesty to all illegal aliens who had remained underground for four years or more. It was billed as the "most comprehensive reform" to meeting the problem of illegal immigration.

The country was told that it would be the last amnesty program ever needed as it placed the burden on employers to validate the status of current and future employees. It attempted to hold employers accountable for knowingly hiring illegal workers. However, the only real enforcement of the law was the blanket pardon given to those liv-



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MY VIEW

ing underground.

Today the problem has not been solved and, in a post-9/11 world, Americans are at risk because of the complacency and incompetence of Washington. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, no friend of the United States, continues to develop ties with Middle Eastern enemies. Al-Qaida continues to exploit the playbook of Hezbollah and Hamas in recruiting men and women in economic despair. And a hemisphere of potential recruits goes unnoticed while human rights are exploited in the unquenchable thirst for cheap labor and higher profits.

According to a recent congressional report, "a nuclear, chemical or biological weapon in the hands of terrorists remains the single greatest threat to our nation." Hoosiers are a welcoming people and admire hard work and achievement. However, in a post-9/11 world, we have to be very careful and mindful of our surroundings.

I talked last year of the exploitation of human beings for profit and of the real cost borne every day by Hoosier taxpayers in health care, education and social services. This year I will continue to do so, but I will also try to get my fellow citizens to think about the security of our state and country. Thomas Jefferson once said that "the price of freedom is eternal vigilance." If our state and nation are to continue to prosper, then we have to enforce the law. We have a right to set the rules by which others become citizens. We have a right to know who is in our country and for what purpose. And we have a right to hold those governments and people accountable for violating our laws.

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