

Effects of Illegal Immigration on Communities

In some regions, local governments are forced to devote escalating amounts of scarce community resources to dealing with the staggering influx of illegal immigrants.

Law enforcement officers struggle to deal with violent drug dealers, gang members, human traffickers and other criminals – at the expense of not responding to the needs of citizens in their communities. Communities bear the costs of arresting, prosecuting, and jailing illegal immigrants who commit crimes. According to a University of Arizona study, those costs for the 28 southwestern border counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas amount to \$125 million per year.

Illegal immigrants pose a public health threat nationwide. Communicable diseases long eradicated in the U.S. are reappearing from across the border and spreading throughout the country, challenging unprepared hospital staff.

Hospitals are federally mandated to provide emergency care to illegal aliens regardless of ability to pay. Since they are not compensated for medical services they are forced to provide, they pass the costs on to paying patients (usually citizens), absorb the costs as long as they can, or reduce or cut services for the community.

Insufficient funding, overcrowding, and uncompensated care are stressing hospital emergency departments to the breaking point. In 2003, emergency rooms treated almost 114 million patients – a 26 percent increase from the previous decade. But during the same 10 years, the U.S. lost 703 hospitals and 425 emergency departments. Currently, 50 percent of emergency room care is uncompensated.

Congress passed a bill in 2001 allocating \$1 billion annually through 2007 to reimburse hospitals for federally mandated care of illegal aliens. Prior to that, the states most affected were reimbursed some of their losses up to \$25 million per year.

According to a study by the U.S.-Mexico Border Counties Coalition, hospitals in Arizona provide up to \$200 million per year in uncompensated care for illegal immigrants.

Even our children have been pulled into the immigration tug-of-war. In April 2004, high school student bodies in various cities divided down Anglo and Latino lines. National flags, patriotic clothing, and taunts resulted in crackdowns on clothing and flag bans.

Life Near the Border

A September 20, 2004, *Time* magazine story titled “Who Left the Door Open?” addresses the explosion of illegal aliens boldly crossing the Mexican border. It describes hordes so large the people almost trip over each other as they pass through the small town of Bisbee, Arizona.

Groups ranging in size from several individuals to as many as a hundred walk through town at all hours. At night, a group of up to 100 people will take over a vacant house.

Others jam into motel rooms and storage rental units. In the daytime, they gather on school playgrounds, roam through people's backyards and hang around apartment buildings.

Some gather at the Burger King to wait for drivers assigned to meet them. Stolen cars await some – keys on the floor. But most of the illegal arrivals keep walking, to designated pickup points down the road, where thousands hop into stolen vehicles and continue their journeys throughout the U.S.

In 2004 Arizona ranked at No. 1 in cars stolen per capita, with 56,000 vehicles stolen in 2003 alone.

The resources of Bisbee's Copper Queen Community Hospital are strained to the breaking point. A small hospital dating back to the turn of the 20th century, emergency room visits have doubled, from 250 a month to over 500. The occasional lone illegal rescued in the desert has exploded into multiple crash victims – from packed vans careening at high speeds from the border. Staff is also treating rising cases of communicable diseases like hepatitis, tuberculosis, and AIDS.

The tiny 14-bed hospital is strangled by deficits – up to \$1.4 million in 2004. The increasing demand for free care forced hospital administrator Jim Dickson to ration and cut services for life-long community members. The long-term care unit – the only place to go for seniors with dementia – was closed.

Another drain on Copper Queen is from the frequent use of “compassionate entry” at the border. Mexican ambulances confront the border patrol and are waved through to the hospital emergency room. Forced to treat everyone who demands emergency care, Dickson says the hospital is in a bind on how to apply for federal reimbursement. “How do I document an undocumented alien? How am I going to prove I rendered that care? They have no Social Security number, no driver's license.”

The *Time* story relates how Americans living in Arizona near the border compare the area to a war zone. Illegal aliens flow nonstop across ranches near the border, dropping backpacks, trash, and dirty clothes as they walk.

“They turn the land into a vast latrine, leaving behind revolting mounds of personal refuse and enough discarded plastic bags to stock a Wal-Mart. Night after night, they cut fences intended to hold in cattle and horses. Cows that eat the bags must often be killed because the plastic becomes lodged between the first and second stomachs. The immigrants steal vehicles and saddles. They poison dogs to quiet them. The illegal traffic is so heavy that some ranchers, because of the disruptions and noise, get very little sleep at night.”

Local law enforcement officers and residents say that they regularly confront Latin Americans (Guatemala, El Salvador, Brazil, Nicaragua and Venezuela), as well as illegal aliens from Bulgaria, China, Russia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran and Iraq. Local police say

the border is an easy way for terrorists to sneak into America, now that airport security has gotten tighter.

Ranchers, law officers, and locals who encounter border crossers say they hear the same story over and over. According to rancher George Morin, "All these people say they are coming for the amnesty program. [They] have been told if they get 10 miles off the border, they are home free."

Hamstringing the INS & Looking the Other Way

According to *Time*, the U.S. is partly to blame. Politicians want to make big business happy, and decades of cheap labor have been making them very happy, indeed. Politicians also seem to be ignoring the concerns of the majority of their constituents in order to please a growing minority group for the sake of votes. Big U.S. employers have had a big stake in cheap foreign labor for many years. They aggressively fight enforcement of laws that hamper their supply.

For example, the INS launched Operation Vanguard in 1998 to crack down on the use of illegal aliens in Nebraska's meatpacking industry. Nebraska was the first phase of a planned nationwide crackdown. Packinghouse employment records were subpoenaed, and the INS tried to match employee numbers with Social Security numbers and other data. The INS identified 4,700 people with discrepancies in their records and proceeded to request documentation of the workers' status.

But the INS was stopped cold. Nebraska meatpackers, farmers, Hispanic groups, local politicians and state congressional delegates jumped on the INS and quickly forced it to drop its investigation.

In some cities, such as Fairfax County, Virginia, local officials break federal and state laws, as well as zoning ordinances, to fund day laborer sites with taxpayer funds. This is just one example of many in which local government officials across America blatantly break the law to keep the supply of cheap illegal labor flowing for employers.

The INS program to crack down on employers hiring illegal aliens ground to a halt. "Final orders levying fines for immigration-law violations plunged 99%, from 1,063 in 1992 to 13 in 2002."

U.S. Banks, IRS & Others Contribute to Problem

Even if the federal government decides to crack down on immigration law enforcement, American employers and businesses are undermining its ability to do so. Banks, phone companies, and health insurance companies have joined employers in taking advantage of the huge pool of illegal workers looking to buy homes, phone service, and medical coverage.

Banks handle the application process the same way as many employers of illegal aliens. They carefully avoid asking whether applicants are legally employed. For Mexican workers, they request the pocket-sized matricula consular ID card issued to Mexican

nationals by their government. Banks also ask for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) issued by the IRS.

The word is out that it's easy for illegal workers to get an ITIN from the IRS. A Mexican national here illegally sends copies of his birth certificate and matricula card, states he is undocumented and without a Social Security number – and the IRS issues an ITIN. No questions asked.

By August 2005, at least 100 of 9,000 U.S. banks were accepting “non-traditional” forms of identification to establish bank accounts for illegal workers. Hundreds of law enforcement agencies nationwide accept Mexico's matricula consular cards as ID – against the FBI's strenuous warnings.

The word is out. Hopeful immigrants around the world are aware of America's internal bickering over granting another huge amnesty to illegal aliens (though officials reportedly now try to avoid the word itself). The following are results from a recent U.S. Border Patrol survey of over 1,000 individuals crossing the border from Mexico:

- 45 percent crossed illegally in response to rumors of an upcoming amnesty.
- 63 percent received information from Mexican government or media about a pending amnesty.
- 64 percent previously crossed the border illegally.
- 80 percent crossed the border illegally to apply for amnesty.
- 66 percent planned to send for family members once inside the U.S.

Judicial Watch, a non-partisan group that monitors government activities and political corruption, obtained the preceding survey results through the Freedom of Information Act. Their website states the border survey was halted when it became apparent that the pending amnesty proposal had spurred an increase in illegal migration to the U.S. – to the embarrassment of our government.

The Dream to Head North

Mexican President Vicente Fox encourages continual migration to America. In 2000 he stated his goal for an open border between the two nations within 10 years. He openly calls illegal Mexican border crossers “heroes” for surviving the journey and sending U.S. dollars back home to Mexico. Jesus Cervantes, director of statistics for Mexico's Central Bank, says, “There have been amnesties and reforms before, and they will continue to occur periodically.”

Many Mexican families reportedly give their babies American names to help them more easily fit in after the inevitable trip north. Oaxaca elementary school director Abelardo Gonzalez said of his students, “From the time they are little kids, they have this idea of going north.”