



Thoughts From . . .

CAPITOL HILL

By Congressman Rodney Alexander



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It is time for a commonsense approach to our current immigration crisis

Washington, D.C. -- Like so many of you, I am increasingly angered by the numerous immigration protests that continue to unfold on the streets of major metropolitan American cities. What disturbs me more than anything is witnessing the numerous illegal aliens, draped with flags of other countries over their shoulders, lecturing hard-working Americans about their rights. Their rights? First and foremost, America is a land of laws and our soil must be sovereign. America is also the land of opportunity, and it will continue to remain so as long as our laws are honored and upheld.

This immigration debate will most likely remain at the forefront of Congress' agenda this summer. However, the manner in which we, as a governing body, address this crisis will either improve our nation as a whole or haunt us for decades to come.

Right now, our nation is paying a price for ignoring the border for years. Our health care systems, which are in need of true reform, are faced with the burdensome costs of providing services to illegal immigrants on a daily basis. Our schools are forced to open their doors and classrooms to illegal immigrants who can't even speak elementary English. There are some who insist that we sing our National Anthem in Spanish. I will never support such a measure. Our National Anthem should be sung in English.

Crime rates, due to drug trafficking by illegal immigrants who cross our borders, continue to escalate.

Many of my constituents living in the 5th District have contacted my offices in Alexandria, Monroe and Washington, D.C., and have expressed similar solutions: build a wall, enforce the borders and crack down on those illegal immigrants already here.

I agree with all three, which all provide a commonsense approach.

That is why I had no problem voting for H.R. 4437, The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005.

Here are a few provisions that are outlined in H.R. 4437:

- **Combat Hiring of Illegal Workers** – The bill institutes an employment eligibility verification system in which employers will check the Social Security numbers and alien identification numbers (provided by employees) against Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) records in order to weed out fraudulent numbers and ensure that their employees are not working in the U.S. illegally.

- **Increased Penalties for Alien Smuggling** - Under current law, individuals convicted of alien smuggling crimes often receive lenient sentences. Provisions in the bill would greatly increase criminal penalties for alien smuggling by establishing mandatory minimum sentences, among other things. These provisions were recommended by a panel of border-area U.S. Attorneys to make it easier to deport smugglers and illegal entrants.
- **Crackdown on Alien Gang Members** This provision would render alien street gang members inadmissible and deportable, and authorize the Attorney General to designate groups or associations as criminal street gangs if they meet certain criteria. Also requires the detention of alien street gang members and bars alien gang members from receiving humanitarian benefits.
- **Increased Penalties for Aliens re-entering Illegally** – Provisions would stiffen penalties for aliens who re-enter the United States after having been removed.
- **Aggravated Felony Provisions** - The provisions would make aggravated felons (crimes of violence) inadmissible and would bar refugees and asylees with aggravated felony convictions from receiving green cards.
- **Cooperation between Border Sheriffs and Federal Law Enforcement** – Provisions in the bill would authorize and reimburse local sheriffs in the 29 counties along the southern border to enforce the immigration laws and transfer illegal aliens to federal custody. It also specifically reimburses those sheriffs for costs associated with detaining illegal aliens whom they arrest until they are able to hand them over to federal authorities. This provision deems aliens in sheriffs' custody to be in federal custody once determined to be in an unlawful status.
- **Increasing DHS Authority for Long-Term Detention** - The U.S. Supreme Court has limited DHS ability to detain dangerous aliens with decisions that have forced hundreds of aliens (such as murderers) to be released into American communities. One alien released because of these Court decisions later shot a state trooper in the head. This change would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) to allow for continued detention of aliens who pose a threat to Americans.
- **Renewing DHS Authority to Use Reinstatement of Removal Process** - In *Morales-Izquierdo v. Ashcroft*, the Ninth Circuit recently invalidated DHS reinstatement of removal regulations, which allows DHS to remove an alien previously deported by simply reinstating the alien's prior order of removal. The House Judiciary Committee has been told that this procedure was used in some 90,000 cases last year, and the Ninth Circuit's decision affects 40% of removals in the Ninth Circuit. This amendment to the INA would clarify DHS's authority to reinstate orders.
- **Barring Terrorist Aliens from Naturalization** - Bars aliens who are potential terrorists or security risks from becoming U.S. citizens.
- **Deportation for DUI** – Would make multiple DUI offenses a deportable offense for all aliens.

The Senate also passed a bill addressing immigration, but I'm optimistic that the provisions in the House's bill will remain following a joint conference. In my opinion, the House's bill is much stronger and reflects the values of most of my constituents. Amnesty for illegal immigrants should not be an option, either.

We, as a nation, have turned a blind eye to the immigration issue for too many years. This will be the case no longer. The way this problem (immigration reform) is addressed today will paint a clear picture of the direction America is heading in the next decade.

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