

Secure America's porous borders; don't grant aliens amnesty

Last week, the U.S. Senate, in the midst of procedural gridlock, pulled its amnesty-guaranteed immigration bill from the floor. This is a win for anyone in this country who thinks -- as I do -- that about 12 million illegal immigrants, although it could be millions more, should not be permitted to skip the line and be awarded U.S. citizenship for breaking our laws.

The Senate's bill was flawed on numerous levels, and that it was legislatively sidelined is testament to the American people's opposition.

I have been contacted by hundreds of constituents on their strong opposition to any amnesty-laden legislation, specifically the most recent Senate-considered measure.

This bill rewards individuals who have unlawfully crossed our borders, granting them a path to citizenship.

These illegal immigrants would be given legal work permits and the entitlement to work in our country without being forced to pay any back taxes for the work they've already done while in the U.S. illegally.

Within this measure and behind the curtain of a "Z" visa, illegal immigrants would be granted amnesty.

Illegal immigrant "Z" visa recipients would overwhelmingly be permitted to stay, live and work on American soil. This not only rewards those who have broken the law by coming here illegally, it's incredibly unfair to those who have played by the rules and continue to wait in line to become U.S. citizens.

Opponents of the Senate amnesty measure -- myself included -- believe fervently that border enforcement must be the first step in any genuine immigration policy. We continue to fail on this effort and by doing so are allowing an influx of undocumented illegal immigrants into our country. This is unacceptable to the American people.

My foremost responsibility as a congressman is to ensure the protection of the American people. When it comes to this debate, our chief objective must be to secure our now permeable borders, which is a clear national security risk.

Nominally, at best, the Senate's bill addresses border security.

Yes, many people are coming here to seek economic prosperity and work to give their children a better life. It's encouraging that America is still viewed as the shining city on the hill, as President Reagan enthusiastically described our republic.

However, there are statutory avenues in place to become a U.S. citizen. Crossing our borders illegally is not one of them.

It is imperative that we stop the terrorists, drug traffickers and violent gang members from entering our country and harming Americans.

The recent foiled terrorist attack at Fort Dix serves as a timely wake-up call to how vulnerable we still are as a nation, namely as a result of the status quo, lack of border enforcement approach that the federal government continues to maintain.

I will continue to hold my ground and work with congressional colleagues -- Democrats and Republicans -- to move as quickly as possible to secure our borders and remain steadfast in opposition to any legislation that will grant a free pass to citizenship to individuals who have come into our country illegally.

U.S. Rep. John Peterson, R-Pleasantville, represents the 5th Congressional District of Pennsylvania and is a member of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. Readers can write to him via www.house.gov/johnpeterson.