

Rebuttal: No matter what president accomplishes, Ryan will find fault

By Peg Maginn for The News-Sentinel
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So the “GOP shouldn’t trust the president on immigration” because he “can’t be counted on to enforce a reform bill as written” (per The News-Sentinel editorial of Feb. 4).

Really? And on what was this dramatic conclusion based? Oh, that’s right, we are to believe this after “connecting the dots” from statements (about an “increasingly lawless presidency”) made by Paul Ryan in a TV interview. Sorry, but I need more than a couple histrionic comments from Ryan before I’m going to jump on this wagon.

Let’s see, what has President Obama done to curb illegal immigration?

Since 2011 he has made deportation of criminals who are illegal aliens a top priority and deferred action on immigrants brought to this country as children who have no criminal record and are attending school. Personally, I considered that sensible enforcement and a wise use of limited resources, as did David Martin, an international law professor at the University of Virginia School of Law.

Also, instead of the old worksite raids, the president has had officials focus on employers. Managers have had to dismiss immigrant workers whose documents were false, or risk prosecution. In 2011 there were more than double the number of investigations than in 2008, and a record \$43 million in fines were levied against companies as a result.

President Obama has expanded the Secure Communities program from 3 percent of U.S. jurisdictions to about 97 percent today. This is a program Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst with the Cato Institute, calls “the most effective immigration enforcement tool to date, as it conscripts local law enforcement into enforcing federal immigration laws.”

Finally, there has been a consistent increase in deportations compared to every year of the Bush administration.

Frankly, I’m convinced that no matter what the president accomplishes, Ryan will find fault. However, the media on which we citizens depend for information should certainly do better than to parrot his fact-free righteous indignation.

The editorial goes on about misuse of executive orders as well. It starts with an admission that the president isn't "the leader" among presidents who have "overused executive orders." That is certainly true, because President Obama's total number of executive orders to date is 168, compared with 291 for George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan's total of 381, as just two examples. Oh, but then President Obama's orders "have far surpassed those of other presidents in the setting of new policies and in the deep and lasting impact on Americans." Although laden with drama, once again this sweeping statement lacks any substantiating evidence.

There is a much more likely reason why the Republicans might want to "let immigration reform go for now." It is because they want to build a voter base within the Hispanic community, most of which actively supports a path to citizenship. On the other hand, some constituents in their current voter base say they won't accept any compromise in dealing with the 11 million people here illegally.

Immigration reform is a complex issue, and people have conflicting ideas about it. But rather than actually governing and providing leadership on this difficult issue (i.e., doing their job), Republicans instead chose to respond by attacking the president and spinning a distracting, emotional mantra for the media to circulate. Unfortunately, this seems to be the current modus operandi in politics today.

My own situation comes to mind as I write this. I was recently labeled a "communist" by an anonymous "ranter" in response to my opinion piece published in The News-Sentinel on Dec. 30. In it I discussed the rapidly widening pay gap between large-company executives and lower-level workers. So far the only argument I've heard against the concerns I raised is that the extremely well-paid executives have truly earned these salary levels by their hard work and so they deserve to be so rewarded. However, if that were true, it would mean that they must be working hundreds of times harder than similar executives were in the 1980s. Do you believe that? I certainly don't.

At no time in person or in my article did I ever denigrate people who are well-paid for working hard, nor did I suggest that we should "redistribute wealth" (which seems to be the latest disparaging "catch phrase"). I've never heard President Obama or Warren Buffett — who expressed concern that his secretary paid a higher tax rate than he did — do or say these things, either. Yet each of them has also been described as a "communist" or a "socialist."

In fact, I own two small businesses, which have provided employment for nine people over the years (a professional practice and a small farm). In addition, I have been an active investor in the stock market for approximately 40 years. And finally, I recently invested a significant amount of unleveraged cash in a private company (which means that if the business fails, I will personally lose this money rather than the burden falling on other taxpayers). If I must be labeled, then the most appropriate word to use would be "capitalist" rather than "communist."

Why is any of this significant? It is significant because words have meaning and they are what we use to communicate with one another. U.S. citizens are a diverse group of people. For us to successfully live together, good communication is vital.

I dearly love my country, and I suspect my “ranter” does as well. That’s why I believe it’s imperative that we read and listen carefully, reflect thoughtfully and express our ideas and opinions clearly, honestly and in a civil manner.