



THE CAROLINIAN

Economic Impact of deportation

Linda Cheng

February 22, 2017

President Donald Trump's immigration policy has several unmentioned caveats- the most prominent of them being the fact that his policies could cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

This aspect is something that most advocates of the immigration policy, including Trump himself, do not seem willing to admit. Despite President Trump's promises to the electorate to lower taxes and decrease the size of the government, as is the standard rhetoric of any right wing politician, this pledge has quite a few hurdles to overcome before it can become reality. Some of these hurdles are of Trump's own making.

Trump's most controversial executive order of putting every illegal immigrant in detention has not only drawn ire from both sides of the aisle but also dramatically impacted the everyday financial stresses of Americans everywhere.

Specifically, the additional taxes that come with building Trump's promised border wall, and the extra funds needed by the government in order to hire additional border patrol officers. The overall high cost of enacting Trump's tough stand on immigrant detention has trapped many legislators within Trump's own party between their own rhetoric and the reality of such rhetoric put into action.

The hallmark of American conservatism, after all, is the belief that government should be small and stay out of people's lives; that taxes should be low, and big government programs like building a border wall should be discouraged. The volume of resources needed to build the border wall, and the taxes that will be needed to fund the purchase of such resources, directly contradicts fiscal conservatism.

While many Republican leaders from Capitol Hill were not immediately thrilled with the border wall plan, Trump is now getting enthusiastic support from Republicans and GOP leaders who opposed it to begin with.

Representative Mark Meadows (R-NC) chairs the small but influential House Freedom Caucus, home to some of Capitol Hill's most conservative Republicans, commented to CNN "Let's be frank: politics have consequences," adding that "November 8 happened, that's why a wall is going to be built."

President Donald Trump's plan for the border wall specifically requires a 2,000 mile long border on Mexico. To put this into perspective, when President George W. Bush approved the

construction of a 700 mile border fencing in the Secure Fence Act of 2006. The 700 mile border fence cost \$7 billion dollars, excluding the additional border patrol officers who had to be hired in order to operate the fence, and the maintenance workers needed to upkeep the fence.

According to the Alliance Bernstein analysts, replacing or modifying the current 700 mile border fence would cost as much as \$25 billion.

Christopher Wilson, who spoke with Wired Magazine, is the deputy director of the Mexico Institute at the Wilson Center who specializes in border and immigration issues.

“The really key part is that a wall or fence or any type of physical barrier only works in conjunction with other tools,” Wilson said, “It’s a nice one liner and it sells well as a sort of silver bullet solution to our complex border problems, but it does not work that way. In reality if you don’t have someone behind the wall then people just climb over it or cut through it or do whatever they need to do to avoid it.”

In fact, replacing a barrier that border patrol officers have convenient visibility with one that is completely opaque and offers no way to look through is actually a liability- not an advantage. With an easily see through border fence, border patrol officers could see presumed illegal immigrants who might try to sneak through the border, allowing them to apprehend the immigrants efficiently.

With an opaque fencing, however, border patrol officers will have more difficulty performing necessary surveillance, putting significantly more pressure on the officers at what is already a stressful job.

“At a basic level, a wall or fence can never stop illegal immigration because a wall or fence cannot apprehend anyone,” David Bier, a Cato Institute immigration policy analyst, commented in November, 2016, to Wired magazine.

This matters particularly when it comes to broader border security implications, like screening to prevent legitimate terrorists from entering the United States, and in efforts to reduce smuggling- particularly drug and human trafficking, and illegal arms sales.

The border wall, additional maintenance, and border patrol crew that would come with Trump’s plan to expand immigration crackdowns already present a significant cost to taxpayers. In addition, Trump’s proposed so called “catch and release” policy would require those immigrants here without the legal paperwork necessary to remain in custody until they can appear in court.

This “catch and release” program would actually require Trump to double or even triple the United States Department of Homeland Security’s \$2.2 billion detention budget, according to calculations by Muzaffar Chishti, the director of the Migration Policy Institute’s office at the New York University School of Law.

Chishti spoke in an interview with The Charlotte Observer, referring to the budget of Trump’s “catch and release” program.

“You’re talking billions of dollars,” Chishti said. “Americans have swallowed a lot in terms of immigration enforcement since 9/11. The issue for the Trump administration is that they’re also trying to reduce the deficit. It’s very difficult to both reduce the deficit and have a huge expansion of the immigration machinery.”

The anticipated costs to revamp the immigration system are already in the billions.

The proposed border wall itself will cost anywhere from \$8 billion to \$10 billion – or most likely much more. The Department of Homeland Security’s budget request sought \$7 billion to pay more than 40,000 officers.

“The border wall will not only have a hugely detrimental effect on the economy,” UNCG freshman Maddy Peek said, “but is an obviously discriminatory program aimed at targeting vulnerable minorities. I am very much against Trump’s immigration policies, and quite honestly, Trump himself.”