Republicans Who Think Trump Has Gone Soft Have a Plan: Criminalize Dreamers, Slash Legal Immigration, and Invade Americans' Privacy

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January 26, 2018

The White House outlined a proposal yesterday that would crack down on unauthorized immigrants and cut legal immigration in exchange for giving 1.5 million or so Dreamers—some of whom are beneficiaries of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)—an eventual pathway to citizenship. It is a restrictionist effort masquerading as a fix. But for the nativists at the Center for Immigration Studies such as Mark Krikorian, it isn't mean enough. They are accusing the president of choking!

They much prefer Virginia Rep. Bob Goodlatte's Securing America's Future Act, a 414-page wish list of far-right demands with virtually no concessions on the other side. This bill, which has 77 cosponsors, has many similarities with the White House plan.

It would ban 38 percent of all *legal* immigrants coming to the country. In 2019 alone, it would exclude 423,000 legal immigrants—the largest single-year cut since the 1920s when Congress decided that Italians, Eastern Europeans, and Jews were destroying America.

By 2028, nearly half as many legal immigrants would be entering the United States as now, if Krikorian and his fellow congressional nativists have their way.

Like the White House plan, the bill would eliminate the right of Americans to sponsor most types of immediate family members—adult children, parents, and siblings—and end the diversity visa lottery. Attorney General Jeff Sessions labeled these immigrants "illiterates" last week. But the fact is that they are much *more* educated than Americans, and nearly half have college degrees.

Banning the employment of some 4.4 million people would be one of the largest labor shocks in history. An University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business analysis of a substantially similar proposal found that cutting immigration to this level would lower GDP by 2 percent between 2018 and 2040. This bill would basically nullify the economic growth projected from Donald Trump's tax cuts.

Moreover, according to the National Academy of Sciences in 2016, the average recent immigrant will contribute, in net present value, between $92,000 and $173,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits over their lifetimes. Family-sponsored immigrants and diversity visa lottery winners are better educated than the average, so their tax contributions would be even higher.

But Goodlatte and his supporters, who otherwise masquerade as fiscal conservatives, evidently don't care much about depleting the federal fisc. Otherwise, they wouldn't require nearly twice as much spending on Border Patrol in the next five years than the agency has spent over the last five decades. Overall, they would require a funding increase of almost $130 billion over five years—virtually none of it paid for through fees or taxes—five times more than what the White House is demanding.

Some of this money would go toward building Donald Trump's worthless vanity wall. But much of it would also go toward implementing a biometric exit surveillance system that would track Americans and foreigners alike when they leave the country. This boondoggle won't improve security, but it will unleash a massive invasion of our privacy by basically turning our faces into our papers! Consider it a high-tech "Papers Please" policy.

To add insult to injury, the bill also mandates America's first electronic national ID system, E-Verify, for all workers—legal and illegal—in the United States, something that the Trump plan actually refrained from doing. The flawed E-Verify system doesn't prevent illegal employment. But its database errors would eliminate more than 430,000 jobs and delay 1.2 million jobs for *legal* workers.

Given how it treats *legal* workers, it is no surprise that it has some draconian notions on how to deal with unauthorized immigrants that might even make Trump blush. Currently, overstaying a visa is a civil offense. But for the first time in America's history, this bill would make that a federal crime punishable not just by deportation but jail! This will once again swell the federal prison population, reversing the gains of recent years.

But the thing that really warms the cockles of nativists is Goodlatte's designs for Dreamers. The bill would give a mere 10 percent of them permission to live in the United States— *not* permanent legal residency or citizenship, mind you. Then it would treat them like criminals on parole, not like free Americans.

On top of the normal fees, Dreamers would have to pay $1,000 in fine for the privilege of living in America. And if they wanted to travel abroad, they'd have to first take permission from Uncle Sam, just as Soviet citizens had to do from communist authorities. They couldn't be away for more than two weeks at a time. Every three years, they would have to pay another $1,000 in fees to undergo background checks and in-person interviews in order to receive another extension of their "parole."

Dreamers would also be required to maintain an income of 125 percent of the poverty line *for the rest of the lives*—no staying at home with their children and no retirement for people who grew up in this country. In other words, this bill would essentially criminalize Dreamer poverty.

The good news is that this exercise in nastiness has little chance of being enacted in its entirety. The bad news is that it's an aspirational document for nativists that offers a roadmap for a step-by-step march toward their vision. That many House Republicans are coalescing around it exposes the lie that they only object to "illegal" immigration. They are just anti-immigration. Period.

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