

The Anniston Star

Jeff Sessions' view of America

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In the imaginary world of Sen. Jeff Sessions, the U.S. economy would blossom and the scarcity of jobs for low-income workers would dissipate if Washington placed strong restrictions on legal immigration.

History proves it, Alabama's junior senator believes.

Last week, in a Washington Post op-ed, the Republican from Mobile wrote that "What we need now is immigration moderation: slowing the pace of new arrivals so that wages can rise, welfare rolls can shrink and the forces of assimilation can knit us all more closely together."

As if it were that simple.

Every movement — real or irrational — needs a public face, an unofficial spokesman. Sessions fills that role for Washington's most ardent immigration critics. It's tough to know whether he believes his rhetoric or if he's decided this tough-on-immigration stance is his next career path on Capitol Hill. Either way, it soils the senator's reputation and does nothing for the state he represents.

In essence, Sessions is mixing a concoction of conservative politics, extreme nativism and a rejection of America's historic foundation of immigrant labor. Yes, America is changing — demographically, politically, racially — a fact that's hidden within the senator's writing. Diversity is the United States' future, and Sessions is choosing to align himself with those uncomfortable with the look of 21st-century America.

We agree with the senator on one basic point: job growth and stagnant wages for low- and middle-income workers are a problem. But Sessions' logic is both ideologically motivated and factually flawed. Don't take our word on that, however.

Last week, the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank that espouses limited government, poked innumerable holes in his theory, saying, "Virtually every economist who studies immigration concludes that it benefits Americans," and that "Senator Sessions' theory that the supply of workers is the prime determinant of wages ignores much." Wednesday morning, The New York

Times' editorial board didn't hold back. "Mr. Sessions ignores the truth, proved over centuries, that immigration over all is good for the American economy," The Times wrote.

In other words, Sessions is wrong.

For the senator and our state, the worst part of his very public immigration stance is it smacks of a Southern politician who has forgotten who we are and how we became the leader of the free world.