



Column: Stop smearing the left on the issue of immigration

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The immigration policies from left wing politicians have recently become so often maligned by Republicans in Congress.

President Trump has made immigration the centerpiece of his political platform, instilling the notion within public discourse that illegal immigration is a top priority.

Since his election, Trump has shut down the government over border wall funding, often calling the situation at the border an “invasion” by illegal immigrants and terrorist groups. This is nothing but a manufactured crisis.

During the government shutdown, Trump and other Republicans often described the Democrats as obstinate, with the Democratic Party now being called “the party of open borders.”

This is far from the truth — no elected Democrats are calling for open borders. No one on the left or the right is in favor of illegal immigration, but solutions like an expensive and impractical border wall are not viable options.

At his town hall April 7 in Oskaloosa, Iowa, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., was asked a question about why he supports open borders. He clarified and responded, “I’m afraid you may be getting your information wrong; I think what we need is comprehensive immigration reform.”

This is demonstrative as to how Democrats are smeared when it comes to immigration. The left wants to limit illegal immigration, and to accomplish this, we need to do things like reverse disastrous trade deals such as NAFTA and CAFTA which drive people out of work in Latin America and legalize, tax and regulate drugs to take the power away from drug cartels.

The immigration platform on the left consists of granting amnesty to immigrants already in the U.S., abolishing unnecessary organizations such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement and, more effectively, combating the causes of illegal immigration into the country.

Undocumented immigrants are essential to the American economy, and it would not be a practical solution to drive them all out. Instead, it is more important to fix the causes of illegal immigration in the first place.

The image often painted of undocumented immigrants is that they are hardened criminals entering the country wreaking havoc in our cities, but this is completely false. Several studies by the Sentencing Project and the Cato Institute show immigrants are far less likely to commit crimes than native-born citizens.

No one has any problem with immediately deporting violent criminals, but government organizations such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement are highly unnecessary, especially

for limiting illegal immigration. ICE was created in 2003 and largely serves as a deportation force instilling fear in immigrants.

Border and Customs Protection already monitors the border, so ICE is just an unnecessary force for immigrant detention. There have also been thousands of ICE detainees who have been put into forced labor at detention centers, violating anti-slavery laws.

Through Trump's anti-immigration policies, the situation at the southern border has become more dire than before he entered office, with illegal immigration up 370% over the past six months, according to Customs and Border Patrol.

The problem of immigration is only exacerbated by right-wing policies such as removing programs like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status for immigrants.

Undocumented immigrants are not violent criminals, just people looking for opportunity. We need to attack the root causes of illegal immigration instead of targeting those who are contributing to the American economy and society — this is the immigration policy the left is advocating for.