



A false crisis and a need for true border security

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As a child psychiatrist, I often had to advise parents how to deal with bad behavior from children. If the child acted out and demanded something in return for stopping the bad behavior, I advised that the parent not give the child what they asked for. To do so would only encourage the child to threaten to do the same thing again when they wanted something.

This is true for adults as well. Thus when President Trump partially shut down the government to try to bully the Democrats into funding the Trump border wall, they did the right thing and demanded Trump end the shutdown before negotiation could occur. Trump finally gave in to a reasonable request to stop abusing 800,000 federal workers.

Of course the president claimed the shutdown is necessary to get funding for the border wall because it is a crisis. But the reasons he gives for it being a crisis don't stand up to the facts.

The president claims it is a crisis because the immigrants contain a flood of violent criminals who raise the crime rate and the wall will stop them.

However, a recent study examined how the violent crime rate changed as the proportion of undocumented immigrants went up in communities throughout the U.S. As the proportion of undocumented immigrants in a community increased, the crime rate for homicide, robbery, aggravated assault and rape all went down (Light & Miller, Criminology, March 2018).

Similarly the Cato Institute, a Libertarian policy organization, found that in Texas the crime rate was 1,797 convictions per 100,000 native-born individuals while the rate for illegal immigrants was 899 per 100,000 illegal immigrants (Feb. 2018, Immigration Research and Policy Brief No.4).

The majority of undocumented immigrants are peaceful individuals who simply seek a better life for their families.

The president claims it is a crisis because drugs are flooding into the country from the southern border and the wall will stop them.

Yet the reports I have seen from every U.S. agency charged with stopping drugs from entering the U.S. says that there is minimal entrance of drugs through lightly patrolled, unfenced routes. The drugs get in through existing U.S. ports of entry, smuggled in vehicles and cargo containers. This suggests we need to invest money in more manpower at ports of entry with more sophisticated scanning equipment rather than in some wall.

The president claims it is a crisis because immigrants take U.S. jobs away from U.S. citizens and the wall will stop them.

The reality is that the December U.S. unemployment rate was 3.9 percent, with a demand for more workers in menial jobs most Americans don't want. Rather than a wall, we need a more streamlined way for immigrants to get migrant worker cards to come into the country legally.

The president claims there is a humanitarian crisis, with immigrants being preyed upon as they try to get into the country. This is actually true but it rings hollow coming from a man who created a humanitarian crisis for 800,000 federal workers plus children and families who see federal funds for school lunches and food stamps dry up.

The only real crisis that I think bothered the president is that he and his party lost the House. So the president's response was to create an artificial crisis, blaming Democrats while hoping that the public is not bright enough to ask: If funding the wall was such a priority, why for the last two years did a Republican-controlled Congress and President Trump do nothing?

Now the shutdown is over and reasonable voices in Congress can work out a compromise deal that addresses real border security, unhampered by the magical belief of the president that a wall will solve our immigration problems. I hope every citizen takes the time to write our congressional delegation to advocate for common-sense immigration reform.

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