

Trump wrong on the value of immigrants

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July 18, 2019

WASHINGTON — President Trump was elected largely on the issue of Hispanic immigration. It's an issue that resonates with a large number of voters, who tell pollsters that it's a major concern — greater than the economy.

When Trump announced his candidacy, he declared that Hispanics crossing our southern border were rapists, murderers, drug dealers and other assorted criminals. In his mind, judging by his fiery rhetoric, there wasn't a single Hispanic migrant entering our country, or seeking to enter, who was a deeply religious, honest, hardworking person who just wanted a better life for themselves and their family.

Surveys of Trump voters find that they believe most immigrants are criminals of one kind or another, that immigrants take away jobs held by other Americans, and that they pose a threat our country.

All of this is untrue, as many studies have made clear throughout our long history.

"What seems beyond debate is that many in our country, including the president, seem insufficiently aware of our history as a nation of immigrants," writes Allan C. Brownfeld, a veteran conservative columnist. "The president's mother was an immigrant, as was his grandfather, as well as his current wife and one of his former wives."

More recently, it was reported in newspapers across the country that Trump's exclusive golf resorts and hotels have for a long time hired undocumented immigrants.

In other words, "Do as I say, but not as I do."

Actually, immigrants in general have significantly contributed to increased job creation, according to a report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

Their study "found little to no effect on the wages and employment of native-born workers in the long term by undocumented immigrants," according to the group's UnidosUS website that tracks immigration trends. "According to a study of the bipartisan immigration bill passed in the Senate in 2014, provisions in the bill could potentially bring between 336,000 and 470,000 undocumented immigrant entrepreneurs into the formal economy."

The report continued, "Given that the average immigrant-owned business hires 11 employees, these businesses would account for between 3.7 million and 5.2 million jobs" in our economy.

As for Trump's charges that immigrants will increase crime in our country, "Studies have confirmed that immigrants are much less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans," the website said.

Bolstering that finding is none other than the Federal Bureau of Prisons, which reported this month that 80.6 percent of the prison population was made up of U.S. citizens. Mexican inmates numbered less than 12 percent.

DACA recipients -- children who came into the U.S. at a very young age and later applied for protections under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals act -- pay \$465 for applications into the program to remain here. This means the program hasn't cost U.S. taxpayers a single cent, the study said.

"Immigration always has been controversial in the U.S. Irish immigrants were scorned as lazy drunks, not to mention Roman Catholics," writes Daniel Griswold, the former director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the conservative Cato Institute. "At the turn of the (previous) century, a wave of 'new immigrants' -- Poles, Italians, Russian Jews -- were believed to be too different ever to assimilate into American life. Today the same fears are raised about immigrants from Latin America and Asia, but current critics of immigration are as wrong as their counterparts were in previous eras."

Hispanic immigrants are often entrepreneurs, forming their own businesses, hiring the unemployed, enriching our culture and reaching out to new markets with their businesses. And they are often family-oriented, deeply religious and hardworking.

As Ronald Reagan told us, people may emigrate to France, but that does not make them French. They may go to Germany, though that won't make them German. But they can come to America and become Americans.