



Editorial: Tweets are not facts. And in other news, water is wet

June 24, 2019

We — and by “we,” we mean us in the media — really need to stop getting so worked up about the president’s tweets.

As near as we can tell, the tweets are just hot air meant to gin up his core 30 percent, to ensure they remember to vote for him in 2020, in the off chance Democratic turnout is low, African-American turnout is low and female voter turnout is low.

Hey, it worked in 2016, right?

The most recent tweet that had us gnashing our teeth was his call for rounding up “illegal aliens.”

“Next week, ICE will begin the process of removing the millions of illegal aliens who have illicitly found their way into the United States. They will be removed as fast as they come in. Mexico, using their strong immigration laws, is doing a very good job of stopping people . . .,” he tweeted June 17.

Our first thought was, “How are you going to find all these people? Every administration — Republican and Democrat — from Reagan on said mass deportations are not a viable solution to the immigration issue.”

On Saturday, June 22, he walked back from deportations, tweeting, “At the request of Democrats, I have delayed the Illegal Immigration Removal Process (Deportation) for two weeks to see if the Democrats and Republicans can get together and work out a solution to the Asylum and Loophole problems at the Southern Border. If not, Deportations start!”

And then we realized it isn’t about creating a viable fix for the nation’s broken immigration system — it’s about telling his base he’s going to do “the right thing” about nonwhite people.

Before you jump all over for us for ascribing a motivation to the president’s actions that he has not expressed, let us explain why we came to this conclusion.

First, all his focus on immigration is on the southern border, despite the fact that, according to the Pew Research Center, illegal border crossings in the south are down about 10 percent over the last decade, while illegal immigrants from countries other than Mexico, South and Central America are up by almost that same percentage (9.6 percent) during the same time period.

In fact, in 2018, CBS News found that illegal border crossings on the northern border were up 142 percent.

And despite the president's claim that the Department of Homeland Security stopped more than 3,000 "known or suspected terrorists" at the southern border in 2018, the actual number was six. Meanwhile, DHS stopped 91 people on the suspected terrorist watch list on the northern border during that same time.

Focus on the Mexican border also doesn't take into account the biggest contributors to illegal immigration — those who legally enter the country. Two times as many illegal immigrants (about 700,000 in 2017 according to U.S. Border Patrol) overstay their visas as cross a border.

And remember, Mexico is America's third-largest trading partner at \$557 billion (and Arizona's top partner), behind China (\$636 billion) and Canada (\$582.4 billion). For the man who says he puts business first, attacking Mexico and the southern border is bad business.

Which is why we believe this has nothing to do with immigration and more to do with using race to scare older white voters.

They hear that jobs are lost to Mexican illegal immigrants, when the reality is it's automation that's taking away jobs — a study by the Brookings Institute identified 36 million jobs (about 25 percent of the American work force) at risk due to machine automation.

They hear that Mexican illegal immigrants engage in more crime, when the Cato Institute, using Texas crime statistics, found illegal immigrants were three times less likely to commit a homicide than a native-born American, three times less likely to commit a sex crime and almost four times less likely to engage in larceny.

They hear that Mexican illegal immigrants don't contribute to the economy and drain welfare and Medicaid when, according to the IRS in 2015, illegal immigrants accounted for \$13.6 billion of federal taxes paid, as well as \$12 billion in taxes for Social Security. Also, illegal immigrants don't qualify for social service programs administered by the states, such as AHCCCS and SNAP.

That's why we believe this has little to do with illegal immigration and more to do with stoking fear over race.

Yes, the nation's immigration system requires a major overhaul, but we in the media need to realize that change is not going to come from the president's stream-of-consciousness Twitter habit.

It's incumbent on us to ignore the nonsense and focus on the facts.