



Hatred of Trump Blocks Support For Border Wall

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President Trump has learned how government works when the House of Representatives is doing its job. He just received a stern lesson in the separation of powers. Pelosi said no and the great negotiator caved. The government is back open for a few weeks. What happens next?

Trump wants his wall and has conveniently forgotten that he declared — insisted — Mexico would pay. Instead, his proposal is to siphon billions of American dollars from urgent infrastructure repairs, and crucial health and education needs.

The president's assertion that this country needs a southern border wall must be vetted. Data showing how many people are entering this country illegally is critical to understanding whether we need a wall. Trump's claims of terrorists on our southern border, who is actually committing crime in America, and where drugs are coming in must be investigated. Finally, will a wall actually work? Surely an investment of such an enormous amount of our collective tax dollars warrants an examination of the points just enumerated.

So what has been going on along our southern border? Compared to the mid-1980s and the early 2000s, when southern border apprehensions topped 1.5 million a year, they are now about 400,000. This is the lowest level since the 1970s. In the years that Obama was calling for increased border protection, the problem was more than twice as bad as it is now. And no one was seriously suggesting a 1,900-mile wall. New sections were added to existing barriers, and illegal border crossings declined.

While part of the decrease in illegal crossings was most certainly due to these new barricades, the economic slowdown that accompanied the recession probably had a larger influence. And since it has ended, the numbers of those crossing illegally have simply remained static.

Trump tells Americans they need a wall to protect them from the hordes of criminals and terrorists that cross the southern border daily. The fact that most terrorists arrive by plane, or cross the Canadian border, is rarely mentioned. A 2017 report from the Libertarian-leaning CATO Institute said that “from 1975 through 2017, seven people who entered the U.S. illegally from ‘special interest’ countries — states tied at least loosely to terrorism — were convicted of planning attacks on U.S. soil. None crossed from Mexico.”

Trump frequently cites statistics that are meant to show that illegal immigrants commit crimes in much higher numbers than the native-born population. Since many reporting bodies do not differentiate between non-citizens, i.e., those here with legal status and those who are here illegally, we can't know with certainty if illegal immigrants are committing more crimes than other groups.

Trump, though, has been known to cite crimes committed by non-citizens and insinuate that they were solely committed by illegal immigrants, which he did in a June 22, 2017 speech. He also implied they were committed at a higher rate than by those born here. Yet there is evidence to suggest that the opposite is actually true. The CATO Institute analyzed 2015 Texas arrest statistics and found “the arrest rate for illegal immigrants was 40 percent below that of native-born Americans.”

And the drugs flooding this country? Leaving aside the question of why Americans are creating the demand driving this influx, how are they getting in? The majority of illegal drugs entering this country are coming through legitimate ports of entry, smuggled in ships, inside tractor-trailers, and on airplanes.

Trump has also lied about Democrats. Yes, they voted for border barriers in the past and will continue to do so. They support immigration reform, while understanding how important immigrant labor is to the American economy. They also realize that helping other countries create and maintain functioning, stable governments is more valuable than a wall. When people aren't forced to leave their home countries because of fear, poverty or failed leadership, then America's illegal immigration problem will cease. What Democrats dismiss is a massive concrete and steel structure that cannot be maintained or guarded without traumatizing the U.S. economy.

While Trump is declaring a crisis on our southern border, nearly half of the illegal immigrants currently in this country arrived here legally and have now over-stayed their visas. The southern border invasion has profoundly collapsed since its height of nearly 15 years ago. The president is using fear and twisting data to gin up support for a wall that looks increasingly unnecessary and monumentally expensive.

Trump's wall, unlike China's or Hadrian's, is not for keeping out marauding armies. We do not expect the Mexican military to invade us. This will be a Berlin-type wall, designed to keep our neighbors out. And it will not work. Desperate people will always try — over, under, around or through — and they'll come because it is worse to remain.

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