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## **Don Rogers: A wall against reality**

Don Rogers

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When it comes to crime, illegal immigrants are better citizens than the American-born.

Surprised? You shouldn't be. It's only what the numbers show, year after year, and the studies find.

Viewed a whole 'nother way, we know when an illegal immigrant commits murder because the conservative media goes bananas. You can practically tick each one off on your fingers, maybe by name. This is because the crime is so rare compared to citizens murdering other citizens. Fox and the rest holler so loud because they get so few opportunities.

Per capita, illegal immigrants commit violent crime at less than half the rate of regular citizens. A study reported in the journal *Criminology* shows communities with higher ratios of illegal immigrants actually are safer. The Cato Institute, founded by those conservative darlings the Koch brothers, finds much the same.

The partial shutdown already has caused more grief than our southern border issues, which largely are self-inflicted anyway.

So who should fear whom, exactly?

Islamic terrorists flowing like water through the southern border? Name one who was part of an attack.

The Trump administration boasts of catching nearly 4,000 terrorists trying to cross over there, more than exist in that part of the world. Yet somehow all these ordinary families manage to slip through and quietly clean our hotel rooms, cook our meals, work at the president's golf course resorts. Go figure.

We know who picks our fruit because no one else will. This might be the most puzzling part of this whole problem. Like other developed nations, our labor force is shrinking without immigrants, including the undocumented who fill in the lowest rungs of the employment ladder. Those jobs go undone without them.

Maybe we should call it a win-win when illegals pay taxes they'll never reap, like, say, Social Security, income tax and so on. Billions and billions of dollars, perhaps a crude balance to what the shrewd American wealthy shelter.

From 1942 to 1964, the Bracero program provided seasonal permits for Mexican farm laborers to work U.S. fields. It wasn't perfect, pocked with strikes, abuses and the Mexican government

seeking to end the agreement from fear of losing workers to the United States. But somehow we muddled through without apocalypse.

Today, such is our fear that we'll even shutter the government to spend and spend and spend some more to keep out the very people we need. It's a moral issue, you understand.

In Trump's world, building a wall is a humanitarian step to solve a crisis no one, including those who live along the border, could see.

In Pelosi's world, a wall is immoral. Does this immorality apply to the fence stretching across 30 percent of the border? It seemed OK with many of her colleagues, including Obama, Clinton and Schumer, who voted for it in 2006.

Here's as convincing evidence as any that polemics in high places is the real crisis, not the undocumented workers cleaning the president's throne.

But would a wall work? Does the cost make sense? Well, good questions.

The fence dividing Tijuana from San Diego seemed to help with the latest human caravan from Central America. But these would-be immigrants seeking asylum intended to arrive — as most do — at established ports of entry.

About a third of illegals come in through the southern and other borders, and their numbers are shrinking. The other two-thirds overstay their visas and work permits. Today, about 1 million fewer illegal immigrants live in the United States than in 2007. The tide seems to be ebbing.

But the drugs! Plenty are smuggled across the border, mainly through the ports of entry, by air and by sea. Too bad the shutdown has crimped the Coast Guard's interdiction efforts. Too bad we grow and manufacture — and overprescribe — so much of our own in this great country.

Hate to break it to you, but a wall isn't holding much back. Most of what it seeks to block already has found other ways in. The crisis it would solve isn't. There are better, cheaper ways to achieve the aim: border security. It's clear we face bigger challenges than this.

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We fear crime by people who commit less than we do, terrorists who don't come that way and have proven less dangerous than our own homes, workers who do the dirty jobs we won't, families who contribute to the economy more than they benefit. Oh, yeah, and it turns out they don't vote, either. Would you if you knew you could be arrested and deported at any moment?

Wall up the south? Might as well make nightly bonfires out of \$100 bills from San Diego to Brownsville. Makes about as much sense.