



Editorial: Out of many, one

January 31, 2018

The State of the Union may indeed be as strong and robust economically as it has ever been. On that score President Trump was spot on last night.

But it cannot remain so if it is being torn asunder by one critical issue that he has vowed to find a bipartisan solution to.

“Struggling communities, especially immigrant communities, will ... be helped by immigration policies that focus on the best interests of American workers and American families,” Trump insisted last night. “So tonight I am extending an open hand to work with members of both parties ... to protect our citizens, of every background, color, and creed.”

People, we hope, like the husband of Karah de Oliveira who was detained by immigration officials in Lawrence even as the couple (she’s a U.S. citizen) was attempting to get his papers in order. Sadly their story isn’t unique.

But Trump held out the possibility not just of legal status but of *a path to citizenship* for some 1.8 million illegal immigrants under an expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (including 700,000 current DACA recipients).

The path to citizenship rankles Republican immigration hawks as much as Trump’s “big beautiful wall” at the Mexican border rankles Democrats. But he signaled last night he’s not backing down on that either. However, now Trump speaks more broadly about “border security” and a \$25 billion “trust fund” for “the border wall system, ports of entry/exit, and northern border improvements and enhancements,” as the White House-released “framework” put it.

Sure Trump wants to curtail so-called chain or family migration — limiting it to spouses and minor children only (no parents or siblings). He also wants to end the diversity visa lottery, which offers some 55,000 visas a year to those from nations under-represented in the current system. But the real danger in Trump’s plan — as pointed out by the libertarian Cato Institute — is that overall it would end up cutting *legal* immigration by 44 percent, or about half a million people a year, a number not seen since the 1920s.

There are those, of course, who will cheer that — most of them in the president’s own party. But such a cut would be devastating to the U.S. economy. That robust economic growth the president touted last night — well, according to Joel Prakken, co-founder of Macroeconomic Advisers — the president’s immigration policy would reduce that by 12.5 percent from the projected level.

When the applause from last night’s speech stops ringing in the president’s ears, perhaps he can focus on the hard numbers — and the hard work ahead on immigration. America needs its Dreamers. Donald Trump does not dispute that. But it needs its future *legal* immigrants too. On that he needs to be re-educated.