

Grand Forks Herald

Our view: As concern mounts, push for immigration reform

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An illegal alien is accused of abducting and killing Mollie Tibbets, the young Iowa woman who was missing for weeks before her body was found Tuesday, Aug. 21, in a cornfield. The suspect, 24-year-old Cristhian Rivera, is an undocumented immigrant from Mexico.

Get ready, because illegal immigration is about to reignite as a hot issue, especially with the midterm elections fewer than three months away.

Actually, it's OK to question the influx of illegal immigrants in the United States. Perhaps it shouldn't be ratcheted up after a single, sad murder because no matter what happens, there will always be some — although hopefully far fewer — illegal aliens in the U.S. However, if there was more control of illegal immigration, there is some likelihood that Tibbets would still be alive.

It's important to note that some studies show illegal immigrants commit fewer crimes per-capita than native-born citizens. As reported earlier this summer in the Washington Post, one study — conducted by the Cato Institute — examined conviction data from 2015 in Texas. The study concluded that "as a percentage of their respective populations, there were 56 percent fewer criminal convictions of illegal immigrants than of native-born Americans in Texas in 2015." The Post also reported another study determined states with larger shares of illegal immigrants tended to have lower crime rates than states with smaller shares from 1990 to 2014.

Take those conclusions with a grain of salt, because some believe the Post has lost its objectivity regarding conservatism and President Trump, who seeks immigration reform.

Studies noted, we return to the point: Tibbets might be alive today with better immigration laws.

In our view, the president was elected in large part due to national frustration that little has been done about an obvious immigration problem. Some estimates show there are more than 10 million people — more than the population of New York City — living illegally in the United States, costing U.S. taxpayers approximately \$8,000 apiece. Although these figures are debated to death by experts on both sides of the issue, estimates show the impact of illegal immigrants to Americans is between \$60 billion and \$116 billion annually.

Some say illegal immigrants fill a void and work at jobs that otherwise would go unfilled. Some say they are a boon to the economy.

Perhaps. Yet they still are here illegally, siphoning away tax dollars, and they just shouldn't be.

It's about laws, and laws should not be ignored.

A merit-based immigration system similar to Canada's should be the goal for the United States. In the wake of the Tibbetts murder, Congress should take advantage of this heightened concern to consider a Canadian-style immigration reform.

This isn't racist. Immigrants who come to the U.S. through the proper channels and who follow our laws should be welcomed. We have work for them, and they should be able to live here in peace as part of our communities. Those who do not come here legally should be turned away.

Illegal immigration is a great problem in the United States, and efforts should be made to slow the tide of people entering the country illegally.