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## Lawmakers must balance border security with compassion, says man whose father was killed by drunken driver in the country illegally

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David Kriehn devoted so much of his life to missionary work overseas that when it came time to retire, his nest egg was too thin to support his family.

So he kept working. The 66-year-old restaurant manager at Famous Dave's on 86th Street and Michigan Road had worked a long shift before heading home about 2:30 a.m. one morning when a car crash ended his life.

In a tragedy echoed by the Feb. 4 deaths of Indianapolis Colts linebacker Edwin Jackson and Uber driver Jeffrey Monroe, Kriehn was killed by a drunken driver who was in the country illegally. That was a year ago today.

Even though he lost his father, Gregory Kriehn said immigration isn't a problem that can be solved with border walls. Or by universal amnesty, either.

"Democrats and Republicans are wrong on immigration," said Kriehn, an electrical and computer engineering professor at California State University in Fresno.

"I'd much rather see some sort of balanced approach. The divisiveness of the country over this issue is very disheartening."

Manuel Orrego-Savala, a 37-year-old Guatemalan citizen, was arrested earlier this month after Indiana State Police say he crashed a Ford F-150 pickup truck into a vehicle stopped on the shoulder of I-70 and killed Jackson and Monroe.

Orrego-Savala had been deported twice and was living in the country illegally, authorities said. Records show he had been convicted of drunken driving in California in 2005. Police say he used a false name when he was arrested last year for driving without a license in Boone County.

The incident has further stoked the nation's contentious debate over immigration reform. While immigration advocates and hardliners trade barbs, people such as Kriehn cope without the loved ones they have lost.

"My father, he was a good man, and he tried to live his life in service to others," Kriehn said. "That's the memory we hold onto."

When President Trump fired off a tweet last week decrying the death of the Colts player, Kriehn said his family was reminded of his dad, the crash, the trial and all the heartache they have suffered.

"The circumstances are pretty similar," Kriehn said. "To me, that shows how broken the system is."

Elizabeth Vargas-Hernandez had been celebrating her 35th birthday on the night she killed David Kriehn. She was at a bar drinking with friends before she plowed her SUV into the back of Kriehn's car on I-465 near the Michigan Road on-ramp about 2:30 a.m.

Evidence presented in court showed her blood-alcohol level was 0.23 percent, nearly three times the legal driving limit of 0.08 percent.

The vehicle's data recorder showed she was driving 111 mph and never hit the brakes.

Vargas-Hernandez, who is from Mexico, told an Indiana State Police officer that she had been living in the United States illegally for about four years.

The 36-year-old was in jail for about six months before she pleaded guilty. She was sentenced on Aug. 2 to four years in prison.

When she is released, federal authorities will deport her.

She had not been deported before, but in June 2003 immigration agents caught her with a group of immigrants being smuggled into the U.S. near Blanding, Utah, said Nicole Alberico, spokeswoman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Vargas-Hernandez admitted that she was in the U.S. illegally and voluntarily returned to Mexico.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, about 820,000 of the 11 million illegal immigrants living in the country have criminal convictions. Research cited by the Cato Institute and the American Immigration Council suggests that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than people born in the United States.

The case of Vargas-Hernandez was not a simple matter for the Kriehn family.

David Kriehn had devoted much of his life to serving others, according to his son. He was a minister who spent 13 years as a missionary in remote areas of Taiwan.

His father's death was more shocking, his son said, because it came at the hands of someone who had escaped the same kind of life that his father had been so dedicated to bettering.

"I know in terms of the God that I serve, we are called to integrate," Gregory Kriehn said. "The people who sojourned with Israel had to follow the rules and guidelines of Israelites."

Immigration is a complicated issue, Kriehn said. Political leaders, he said, must balance security with compassion.

"I understand people come from different backgrounds, and they want to escape the situation they are in," Kriehn said. "At the same time, it's not right when there is a flagrant disregard for the rule and the law of the land."