

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Ann Coulter: Immigrants 'Want To Live Here Illegally'

March 7, 2013

Don't look to Ann Coulter for insight on the immigration debate.

The conservative pundit says undocumented immigrants do not want citizenship, but instead want to remain in the country illegally, in order to receive government benefits.

Coulter made the inaccurate statements Wednesday in an appearance on the Sean Hannity show, where she went off on an error-filled rant about immigration, lashing out at Republican Sen. Marco Rubio and Latin American immigrants alike:

Of course you start with enforcement first, but it really has to be enforcement first, not legalize them first and then act as if well the one thing they really want is citizenship -- no, they want to live here illegally, that allows them to collect government assistance.

The statement doesn't make much sense. The vast majority of undocumented immigrants are not legally eligible for most government assistance, though many households have members who are both citizens and undocumented.

While polling data for undocumented immigrants is not easy to come by, protests against record-level deportations during the Obama administration are common. Anyone who has reported on the topic knows the vast majority of undocumented immigrants would prefer to regularize their status than run the risk of winding up in detention and deportation proceedings.

Coulter went on to exaggerate the size of the unauthorized immigrant population in the United States, putting it at 22 million without citing a source -- almost double the Pew Hispanic Center estimate of 11.1 million. She used the same incorrect figure in a column published last month.

The conservative commentator also said the legal immigration system should stop admitting so many people from the third world, characterizing Latin American immigrants as a drain on government resources since they tend to have lower incomes than the native-born.

This is an often-repeated talking point among conservative pundits based on assumption rather than data. In fact, low-income immigrant households use less public benefits than their native-born counterparts, according to study by the Cato Institute published this

month. The average value per recipient is also lower than for the native-born, the study says.

And a study by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities from last year found that Latinos, including both immigrant and non-immigrants, actually use less than their fair share of government benefits.