

## Restricting immigration will not help Kansas

By: Jessie Bullock – April 30, 2013

---

Last week, Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach cried wolf in front of a Senate panel in Washington. He suggested that a more open immigration bill could make it easier for potential terrorists, such as the Tsarnaev brothers behind the Boston bombing, to enter the U.S. and earn “amnesty.”

Associating illegal immigration with the Boston bombing and one terrorist incident shows that Kobach was trying to capitalize on people’s fear. Kobach stated, “(Tamarlan) Tsarnaev had at least two background checks and he had a personal interview with the FBI, yet they were still unable to conclude that he might have terrorist intentions and should be barred from the country.”

How much longer does Kobach intend to drive Kansas down the wrong path?

Associating Tsarnaev with all immigrants is a gross misrepresentation. It is parallel to associating radical Islamists with all individuals who practice Islam and are peaceful people. We can dismiss his link for what it is: exaggerated fear-mongering.

Instead of demonizing immigrants and insinuating that immigrants are all potential terrorists, consider an alternative: opening our borders and including immigrants within our legal framework. Is it possible that doing so could make us safer?

I believe so. “Removing peaceful people from the immigration black market and channeling future immigrants into a legal system — after security, criminal, and health checks — is likely to increase safety, not diminish it,” stated immigration policy analyst Alex Nowrasteh, from The Cato Institute.

Nowrasteh states that law enforcement officials will be able to better allocate resources when they are not policing harmless immigrant activity, wasting our tax dollars stopping “suspicious” drivers, or raiding workplaces. I would prefer that our police focus their scarce resources on crime and true dangers to our community.

How else could including immigrants within the legal framework make Kansas better? Instead of “stealing” Kansans’ jobs, as Kobach and immigration critics claim, immigrants typically take the unwanted jobs that Americans have left behind or they create their own through entrepreneurial activity. As a state with a robust agricultural industry, we should see increased pathways to citizenship as a way to make all of us richer.

Many agricultural jobs are ones that Americans do not want, and the agricultural labor supply is falling short of demand in many regions.

Legalizing current immigrant agricultural workers could save many large Kansas farms the cost of engaging in illegal activity. It could save the rest of us the costs of unnecessary law enforcement.

As our country begins to enact comprehensive immigration reform, it is time for a paradigm shift in Kansans' thinking: facilitating pathways to citizenship and inclusion of formerly illegal immigrants in the state's legal system.

By associating Tsarnaev with illegal immigrants, Kobach is not making our state safer or more prosperous. The best solution to the immigration issue is to legalize peaceful immigrants who are contributing to our economy, and to let law enforcement concentrate their time and scarce resources on keeping peaceful Kansans safe.

Making Kansas a more inclusive state will yield long-term benefits and make all of us more prosperous. Isn't that what we all want?