

The Reflector

The southern border does not present an emergency

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The United States' southern border has been the subject of political contention for the entirety of President Donald Trump's time in office. With Trump's recent declaration of a national emergency to fund a border wall, the topic has reached a fever pitch.

Illegal immigration was, and is, a central part of Trump's platform, and it has fueled his rhetoric since the 2016 presidential campaign.

Going as far back as Trump's presidential campaign announcement speech in June 2015, he has specifically called Mexican immigrants problematic.

"They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people," Trump said, as reported by Michelle Ye Hee Lee of [The Washington Post](#).

It was only a matter of time before this vitriol came back to bite Trump, for when one wins the presidency on the back of anti-immigration policy points, they are expected to provide a solution to this supposed problem.

I do not envy Trump's position. Having made promise after promise to build a southern border wall, Trump has a constituency wanting results; but a border wall is neither desirable nor politically feasible.

According to [Pew Research](#), 76 percent of immigrants are here legally, but a 2018 Pew Research study found only 45 percent of Americans were correct in saying legal immigrants comprised the majority of total immigration.

These two statistics provide an important insight regarding the current immigration debate, as most Americans believe illegal immigration is a larger problem than it is.

It is clear there is the rhetorical reality created by politicians—unchecked mass immigration creates chaos. However, the statistical reality created by facts is the opposite—the reality of fluctuating movements of overwhelmingly innocent migrants.

The border wall is symbolic of this dichotomy. It would be a symbol of the efficiency of this rhetorical reality, combating a nonexistent issue. This is not to say illegal immigration should not be addressed. It should. However, the border wall is predicated on hateful lies, which only serve to galvanize voters, and its construction would be a monument to this hatred.

Research and statistics contradict the president's immigrant generalizations. Alan Gomez of [USA Today](#) reports Customs and Border Protection statistics reveal the vast majority of illicit

drugs are seized at legal-entry points on the southern border, not at some nondescript point in the desert. So, a longer border wall would not address the issue of drug trafficking.

Furthermore, the Cato Institute's Alex Nowrasteh reports, "For all criminal convictions in Texas in 2015, illegal immigrants had a criminal conviction rate 50 percent below that of native-born Americans. Legal immigrants had a criminal conviction rate 66 percent below that of native-born Americans." Immigrants are not more criminally inclined than native-born Americans, and they are not invaders seeking to destroy American values.

If not the border wall, then what should America do about illegal immigration? Rather than create a destructive and disparaging stereotype of immigrants, it would be far more productive to create easier access to legal methods of immigration.

The difficulty associated with immigrating to the U.S. incentivizes illegal entry, and for those in dire economic need or fleeing danger, the wait for receiving legality presents a greater threat than the possibility of arrest.

If immigrants are willing to make themselves a better life and work toward a better America, it is not fruitful for America to deny them this opportunity. Instead, it would serve America well to live up to the ideals of opportunity its politicians so often espouse.