

GOP should enforce its own party platform on immigration

By: Alex Nowrasteh

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Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) is the standard-bearer of the anti-immigration reform bloc in the GOP — even [opposing](#) some legal immigration. In defense of his position, King recently asserted that his views are actually the views of the whole GOP.

"You will find language in the Republican Party platform that supports the position I've long held on immigration," he [claimed](#).

King clearly hasn't read his own party's platform. The Republican Party's platform is unequivocally pro-legal immigration. On this topic, it [states](#):

"Just as immigrant labor helped build our country in the past, today's legal immigrants are making vital contributions in every aspect of our national life. Their industry and commitment to American values strengthens our economy, enriches our culture, and enables us to better understand and more effectively compete with the rest of the world."

King [spurned](#) the GOP platform in 2009, when he said, "Poorly educated foreign workers will hurt our country and hinder our economic recovery. Americans are conditioned to believe that such immigrants are necessary to our economy."

But King goes further than just opposing lower skilled immigrants. He is also steadfastly opposed to legal guest workers, [arguing](#) this year that the country needs a "tighter labor supply," not foreign workers who are "illiterate in their own language." If migrant literacy is King's real concern, he should rest assured that virtually all legal adult migrants are literate.

King needs to be more familiar with the immigration laws he wants to vigorously enforce. Since 1917, illiteracy has disqualified immigrants from being able to legally immigrate to the United States. He can oppose illiterate migrants all he wants, but his predecessors in Congress banned them almost a century ago.

The GOP platform and King also diverge on guest worker policies. The platform calls for "[a] legal and reliable source of foreign labor where needed through a new guest worker program"

and criticizes the Obama administration for "fail[ing] to enforce the legal means for workers or employers who want to operate within the law."

The Republican Party platform also calls for increasing permanent high-skilled immigration without corresponding decreases in other immigrant categories. "We should encourage the world's innovators and inventors to create our common future and their permanent homes here," it says.

Another GOP plank disavows deportation of non-criminals — King's main area of interest. The GOP platform opposes amnesty or legalization of unlawful immigrants, but it only supports deportation for "gang members" and "criminal aliens."

The GOP platform also supports "humane procedures to encourage illegal aliens to return home voluntarily." When similar procedures were enacted in Arizona in 2008, they included labor regulations like mandatory electronic verification for employment and the so-called "business death penalty" for firms that consistently hired unlawful immigrants. Such regulations conflict with the platform's support for keeping "taxation, litigation, and regulation to a minimum."

However, some Republicans are trying to uphold the GOP's immigration platform. Reps. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) and Raúl Labrador (R-Idaho), who both sit on the House Judiciary Committee with King, want to create flexible guest-worker visa programs and repeal certain legal catch-22s in the immigration law that prevent many current illegal immigrants from legalizing. King has opposed both actions in defiance of his party's platform.

King's support for harsh immigration restrictions is in conflict with the GOP. Neither the GOP's party platform, nor its party's leadership, nor his own committee supports his harsh views on immigration. The Republican House has so far failed to tackle immigration and its platform does not go far enough in supporting immigration reform, but the Grand Old Party does not share King's views on immigration.

Nowrasteh is the immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute.