



LUBBOCK AVALANCHE-JOURNAL
lubbockonline.com

Immigrants are good for the economy

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June 7, 2018

Regarding the recent letter to the editor in Lubbock Avalanche-Journal (Letter: Those who want open borders should open up their homes, June 2, www.lubbockonline.com), the letter writer argues that the economic costs of illegal immigration are “very high.”

He also indirectly accuses advocates of greater immigration of hypocrisy, admonishing them to “show a little sincerity and take in a few families in the back bedrooms instead of trying to force their ideas on the pocketbooks of the taxpayer.”

Both of his arguments are wrong.

On his first point, illegal immigration is not a high cost to the taxpayer. Illegal immigrants cannot receive entitlements and means-tested welfare benefits, except for emergency medical care. In addition, it's not enough to just look at costs; we need to consider benefits as well.

Immigrants, regardless of legality, grow the economy by producing more goods and services. This generates additional tax revenue.

As Alex Nowrasteh, a policy analyst for the Cato Institute, argues, “The empirics on this are fairly consistent - immigrants in the United States have about a net-zero impact on government budgets.” (“The 14 Most Common Arguments Against Immigration and Why They’re Wrong,” 2 May 2018).

On his second point, the analogy between a household and a country is faulty. I have a right to exclude others from my property; I do not have the right to exclude others from your property. Since I do not have the right to dictate to you how to use your property, or whom you may contract with, I cannot delegate that right to a representative or other government official. Immigration restrictions of the kind favored by Mr. Lea are thus violations of property rights, and hence unjust.

Economically and ethically, restrictions on immigration are undesirable. We should find better uses of public resources than keeping out those who want to contribute to our economy and build a better life.