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## AMERICA'S NEWS FEED

### **America must choose between closed borders or economic freedom**

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Imagine an independently operating national police force with the power to raid over 1,300 private businesses, arrest 139 employers and 172 employees, and order the businesses to pay fines and restitution to the tune of nearly \$100 million. No votes. No court orders. No due process. Just people with guns taking away people without papers.

After Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents swept 77 North California businesses in the first week of February, agency spokesperson James Schwab said we are “protecting jobs for U.S. citizens and others who are lawfully employed, eliminating unfair competitive advantages for companies that hire an illegal workforce, and strengthening public safety and national security.” While these unnamed employers were forced to deal with the federal pressure and paperwork, no arrests were made.

A month earlier, ICE targeted almost 100 7-Eleven locations around the country, arresting 21 suspected undocumented immigrants. ICE’s more aggressive strategy of targeting private businesses is part of what Schwab calls a “stepped-up” crackdown on undocumented workers.

I’ve never seen anyone request their cashier’s papers before buying their morning cup of coffee or interrogate the stock clerk about his citizenship before grabbing that doughnut or question the person mopping up their mess about his immigration status. Most Americans don’t really care about that 7-Eleven employee’s papers during their 10-second interaction, they only care about getting the good or service they paid for—the same goes for business owners aiming to provide the best service for the cheapest cost.

ICE’s “stepped-up” agenda is nothing but a hassle for hard-working people, American or otherwise. It amounts to a small group of busybody bureaucrats with comfy government jobs who don’t have to worry about running to grab their coffee from the corner convenience store. They are more concerned with empty platitudes about “unfair competitive advantages.” Is it an unfair advantage to hire the best person possible for a job? Don’t employers have the right to be competitive? Don’t we all benefit from that right?

Yes, some employers hire individuals who lack the approved federal paperwork. But time and resources are limited—are ours better spent chasing down the folks preparing our morning coffee or rolling back the red tape making it so difficult for them to acquire that paperwork? At some point, an economy slowed by this red tape, with employers and workers fearing government expropriation, becomes reminiscent of a different kind of red.

Draconian border restrictions amount to little more than international labor market restrictions. Trying to centrally plan the job market is an impossible task. Workers must have the liberty to sell their labor where it is most highly valued.

The freedom to build, trade, and profit are inseparable from any notion of economic freedom, but they are useless without the freedom to move. The freedom to move somewhere new, somewhere better, where your talents and skills can reap a higher reward. The freedom to move without waiting for the approval of some federal bureaucrat is at the heart of economic freedom itself. Productive workers and employers living in fear of government expropriation

Schwab should try asking employers why they didn't hire an American citizen for a particular job to learn something about business and satisfying your customers. Surely, a business hires someone because the alternative is less profitable. Either another potential worker demands a price for their labor that's too high, or they simply don't have the skills to warrant their pay. As Alex Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute shows, "Immigration does not divide a fixed pie of wealth; it increases wealth, incomes, and job opportunities for everybody."

ICE raids do not help U.S. workers in any way. They merely impose costly uncertainty on employers and lock away—or deport—productive labor and ingenuity, without which consumers face higher prices. Not to mention the resources diverted from more cashiers, stock clerks, and moppers to pay the federal fines or taxes that fund the raids, arrests, and detentions. It takes a fatal conceit for ICE to believe it knows better than 7-Eleven employers who they should or shouldn't hire. ICE's arrogance threatens economic freedom and prosperity, and it doesn't protect Americans one bit.