



Immigration Reform 2013: Conservatives Have Every Reason to Support It

By: Danny Zeng- June 7, 2013

Marco Rubio, with his hat in his arm, went over to the Capitol Hill this week and presented his best case on comprehensive immigration reform to skeptical House Republicans, with whom the fate of immigration reform lies. Senator Chuck Schumer seems to believe that the bill will pass Senate by July 4.

However, the American people are not so rosy. A poll released in recent days shows that only one in four Americans believes that Congress would pass immigration legislation this year. Politically, this low-level expectation may play into the hands of House GOP who espouse little incentive to overhaul immigration anyways, especially considering an ongoing debate amongst Party veterans and activists regarding whether or not GOP would be able to get votes out of Hispanics and Asians even if immigration is reformed with some sort of path to citizenship. In addition, the controversial damning report by the Heritage Foundation on the fiscal impact of immigration provided critics with policy ammunition. As Daniel Foster pointed out, the Heritage report if anything is not a crutch argument against immigration reform but indeed an excellent one to roll back the welfare state. From my standpoint, I couldn't agree more.

There exists a strong, conservative rationale for comprehensive immigration reform that focuses on economic growth and dynamism that should attract more conservative support. Instead it's being constantly undermined by the elite conservative punditocracy.

Laura Ingraham, on Fox News with Marco Rubio yesterday, seems to refuse there exists a link between immigration and the economy by telling Rubio flatly, "do them separately ... it's not a top priority for the country." Nothing can be farther from the truth. The U.S. economy has historically been averaging about 3% annually (3.48% to be precise) but has recently slowed to an average of about 2% post-recession. In order for our economy to achieve sustainable growth that can raise our standards of living, increase prosperity, and achieve growth of the pie, we need greater labor participation rate and a more skilled workforce. Immigrants are able to fulfill both of those needs.

In fact, more than two-thirds of the labor-force growth between 2000 and 2005 came from immigrants. That proportion had dipped in recent years as result of the recession, but immigrants' contribution to economic growth can easily be ignored by the chicanery of political labeling. Additionally, the Cato Institute published a study last year that concludes that comprehensive immigration reform will have a net positive \$1.5 trillion contribution to our economy, as real wages tend to go up for unlawful immigrants who come out of the shadow, yielding higher consumption and more government revenues.

The Chief Actuary of the Social Security Administration has also found that the Senate immigration bill will have a "substantial positive effect" on the economy by shoring up entitlements. The bill is projected to add more than \$275 billion in revenue to Social Security

and Medicare, increase the GDP by 1.63% and add more than 3 million jobs over the next decade.

The current system allows great majority of immigrants to come to our country via family reunification instead of employment. Only small portion of immigrants come for reasons of employment because we arbitrarily capped their entrance. Thus, our immigration policy by design excludes productive factors of production, namely human resources, *from* positively contributing to our recovering economy. Do we really want to condemn ourselves to lower standards of living in the future as result of our misguided immigration policy that *can* be altered and modernized to adapt to labor market needs? If so, this would be a deliberate policy sabotage that undermines the free market and hinders economic growth — sounds un-conservative to me.

To those conservative critics who want to argue on principles, dare I ask what are those principles you speak of if not the preservation of freedom and opportunity? For Republican policy makers, don't just reform the immigration system to "fix" an electoral issue, for that is only a temporary solution to a systematic problem. Though by all means reform the system because such action will grow our economy and expand job opportunities. For all the talk about principles, I cannot fathom better ways to promote conservatism than enacting policies in favor of dynamic economic growth and opportunities.

My guess is that the House version of the immigration reform will do away with a pathway to *citizenship* and replace it with a pathway to *residency*. This will curb criticisms from the Rule-of-Law hardliners who are most vocal against "amnesty" while still maintaining *a* path to allow illegal immigrants to remain in the U.S. and contribute to our economy. That would be the best scenario. However, I have increasingly aligned myself with the one in four who shares little faith in our legislative branch to tackle such a serious issue.