

 Arizona Daily Star

## We need Kyl and McCain to get on the right side of immigration debate

**Matthew Green Special To The Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Thursday, May 13, 2010 12:00 am**

The passage of Arizona Senate Bill 1070 into law has reignited the national immigration debate, which had been smoldering since the summer of 2007. The last real immigration reform bill considered by Congress died almost three years ago. That bill was a compromise based on three previously failed bills. Sen. John McCain introduced the first of those bills. Sen. Jon Kyl proposed the second.

Each bill had two main parts: border security and a path to legalization for undocumented workers firmly rooted here. Opponents of reform prevailed, insisting that only the first component-increased border security-was an acceptable solution to the immigration problem. Those on the front lines knew better.

Today, the opponents of immigration reform still demand border security only. Never mind that more than 600 miles of the planned border fencing has been constructed. Never mind that more than 20,000 Border Patrol agents have been hired. Illegal immigration has decreased considerably, but drug trafficking and human smuggling on the border continues to flourish, which is a huge problem for national security and for public safety. Organized border crime will never be eliminated by simply throwing an endless amount of taxpayer dollars at the problem.

American government is nearly bankrupt. Yet, in a total about-face from their earlier, well-reasoned approaches to the problem, Kyl and McCain have issued an ultimatum that apparently must be met before they will talk again about comprehensive immigration reform. They demand that government spend tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars more for border enforcement.

This is unfortunate. By adopting comprehensive immigration reform that focuses on both issues - border security and providing lawful status to the millions of people living here - the latter more than pays for the former.

According to a report issued by the Cato Institute last August, 8.3 million workers in the U.S. are undocumented immigrants. The Cato Institute, a libertarian but often conservative-leaning think tank, concluded that a legalization process "would allow immigrants to have higher productivity and create more openings for Americans in higher-skilled occupations. The positive impact for U.S. households of legalization under an optimal visa tax would be 1.27 percent of GDP or \$180 billion."

As Americans, we could use an extra \$180 billion right now. As Arizonans, we must have effective and smart border security. If our leaders are serious about jobs, the economy, homeland security and public safety, they will deal honestly with a comprehensive approach to fixing immigration that will succeed.

We need Sens. Kyl and McCain to get on the right side of the immigration debate. Again.

*E-mail Matthew Green at [mgreenh@arizonaimmigration.net](mailto:mgreenh@arizonaimmigration.net)*