

DAILY COMMERCIAL

From the left: America needs comprehensive immigration reform

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President Donald Trump's "economic white nationalist" immigration policies are based, in part, on his racism and the faulty belief that immigrants are detrimental to our economy.

Trump's immigration policies go against the very history of immigrants who came to the U.S. and built our nation. With few exceptions, immigrants are not rapists, murderers or members of MS-13. They are human beings who come here for the same reasons immigrants have always come to America — to escape religious oppression, seek asylum from war, violence, famine and poverty — for the dream of a better life.

The question now: How are we going to treat immigrants in our country? Will it be with brutality, or will we recognize the contributions they make to our economy and the need for a younger and more diverse working population versus an aging white population?

The various travel bans Trump has placed on predominantly Muslim countries — due to his stated bias against Muslims — will be decided by the Supreme Court.

Trump ended former President Barack Obama's DACA (Deferred Action for Children) Dreamers program, effective March 2018. These young adults came as children with parents who entered the country illegally years ago, but under this program if they met several requirements, had a full time residence since 2007, work, school or military service plus no conviction of a serious crime, they couldn't qualify for citizenship but were given work permits and deferral from deportation. The courts have stopped deportation of Dreamers until Trump's Homeland Security can explain why the program was ended. The cost economically of ending this program, according to the conservative Cato Institute estimates, could cost the U.S. economy \$215 billion over 10 years — the spending power of these employed young people.

The proposed Trump, Senate immigration bill offered 1.8 million Dreamers a 12 year pathway to citizenship, while placing strict limits on legal reunification immigration, ending the diversity visa lottery for 50,000 immigrants yearly and committed \$25 billion for the wall Mexico isn't paying to build, along their border. Dreamers, Republicans and Democrats all opposed this bill.

Trump's supposed deterrent immigration policy — not a Democratic law — is criminally prosecuting immigrant families legally applying at our border for asylum. When charged by ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) the parents are placed in custody and their children are placed in refugee facilities or foster care. In May 2018, 600 children and their parents faced this traumatizing persecution when they were separated under Trump's policy.

Arrests by ICE of non-criminal immigrants in 2017 increased 171 percent — 40 percent of deportations were non-criminals. Many of those deported were hard working individuals — not criminals — who paid taxes, lived in this country for decades, often established businesses, had homes and families but were ineligible for citizenship.

Taxpayers are paying for Trump's disastrous immigration policies because of the additional cost of courts and judges to handle deportation cases and prosecutions, increased border patrol, ICE agents and our National Guard on the border. Five additional detention facilities will cost \$2 billion a year and if Trump gets his wish, a \$25 billion border wall would be another expense.

Our economy is losing the spending power and taxes paid by of all those non-criminal workers who are being deported. While the U.S. economy is now considered to be at full employment, many businesses are not operating at full capacity because they have lost much of their necessary labor force in agriculture, restaurants, hotels, etc.

America is changing, according to the latest population projected analysis by The Brookings Institution, based on the U.S. Census. "Our nation will be 'minority-white' by 2045. For those under 18 years of age, minorities will outnumber whites in 2020. For those age 18-29 — members of the younger labor force and voting age populations — the tipping point will occur in 2027."

We must elect representatives who have the courage to pass comprehensive immigration reform. America was built by immigrants, no matter the color of their skin, their religion or the country of their birth. We need laws to protect them.