

TribTalk

Americans — and American values — support immigration and compromise

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In the midst of the current immigration debate, on the day after the Fourth of July, the commander in chief of the United States tweeted, “Democrats want anarchy, amnesty, and chaos. Republicans want LAW, ORDER, and JUSTICE!”

Leaving aside the divisiveness of this tweet from a man who vowed upon his election to be president “for all Americans,” the statement illustrates some core fallacies in the current GOP immigration arguments: painting dissenters with a broad brush without trying to understand their actual positions and assuming a dichotomy of beliefs between parties that the facts don’t support.

Most Americans actually support immigration, and that number keeps going up, according to the latest Gallup poll: “A record-high 75 percent of Americans, including majorities across all party groups, think immigration is a good thing for the U.S., up from 71 percent last year.” Three-quarters of Americans of all political stripes favor common sense, compassionate treatment of immigrants, who make up a large part of the workforce in industries that are currently suffering from a lack of labor. They understand that without a Social Security number, no illegal immigrant can take advantage of government programs, which seems to be a main concern for many people. In fact, immigrants demonstrably help grow our economy: An internal government report found that refugees brought in \$63 billion more in tax revenue over the past decade than they cost the government. Yet the Trump administration — which commissioned the study — suppressed the report.

Despite the fearmongering and outright lies being told by the current administration about criminal behavior among immigrants, the Koch-funded Cato Institute published a research and policy brief showing that immigrants commit crimes at much lower rates than Americans and debunking two myths about immigrants: “The first myth is that illegal immigrants are especially crime-prone. The second myth is that there are actually two to three times as many illegal immigrants as is commonly reported.”

In addition, nearly nine in 10 Americans support the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) that allows young immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children to remain in the country, enabling them to continue contributing to our economy, something Democrats and even nearly 80 percent of Republicans are all for. In fact, more than 80 percent of voters support a legal path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants in general, and two-thirds oppose the U.S. limiting family immigration (so-called “chain migration”).

What Democrats — and nearly 70 percent of all Americans — don't support is separating families, detaining people longer than the law allows and putting draconian restrictions on

asylum laws that allow human rights violations to occur without our doing anything to help the victims. Many immigrants arrive seeking asylum, which is a lawful way to enter the country — in fact, the official government application for asylum-seekers explicitly states that the first step is to show up here in the U.S. People seeking asylum from danger in their own countries rarely have the luxury of waiting for permission — and what parent, fearing for her child's life, wouldn't find any way possible to protect them? That's an instinct that crosses party lines as well.

In his 2013 State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama asked the Republican-led Congress to bring him a comprehensive immigration reform act in an effort to work with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. Most of us understand that compromise is the way forward — just as it is in marriage, family, friendship and every other relationship in life.

Perhaps this president might find more success with immigration reform — which both sides would likely agree is necessary — if he stopped attacking Democrats and instead looked to find common ground for meaningful, effective immigration reform that upholds core values Americans on both sides of the aisle share, like opportunity, equality and basic human decency.