

Mankato Free Press

White House denying facts about refugees

September 20, 2017

Nagging facts keep getting in the way for President Trump as he must soon decide whether he will cut the number of refugees allowed in the country in 2018.

During the campaign a central message from Trump was that refugees take American jobs by working for less and holding down pay of U.S. workers, while sucking up tax money and creating a high risk for terrorism.

As seems to be the case on most every issue in this incohesive administration, there are intense differences in positions among Trump's inner circle.

This week a draft report from Trump's own Department of Health and Human Services found that refugees brought in \$63 billion more in government revenues during the past decade than they cost, according to The New York Times.

White House officials quickly dismissed the report, calling it inaccurate and criticizing it being leaked to the media.

It's not the first report to show refugees are a boon to the business community, the economy and the country.

Research has long shown that while refugees initially need more taxpayers funded services when they first arrive, they soon pay more in taxes than they consume in public programs.

The other economic argument promoted by anti-refugee forces is that they undercut American job seekers and put downward pressure on wages.

Last year the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine produced a major report showing there are no negative effects on overall wages and employment of native-born workers in the longer term. Unskilled refugees are more likely to take low-paying, labor-intensive jobs that otherwise go unfilled.

And many of the refugees who have arrived are highly skilled, such as doctors and engineers. They're not taking jobs from skilled Americans, they're filling positions in industries that need more skilled workers than are available.

As far as Trump's vitriol on refugees being a big terrorism threat, the facts dispute him.

The Atlantic magazine earlier this year looked at the countries put on Trump's earlier travel ban list to determine how many acts of violence and terrorism people from those countries have committed here.

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration expert at the libertarian Cato Institute, sifted through a variety of databases, court documents and media reports and found that nationals of the seven countries singled out by Trump have killed zero people in terrorist attacks on U.S. soil between 1975 and 2015. The Atlantic noted that over those years just 17 people (six Iranians, six Sudanese, two Somalis, two Iraqis, and one Yemeni) have been convicted of attempting terrorist attacks.

Refugees are in fact heavily vetted before being allowed in.

The country should be beyond arguing about whether to take a fair share of those who are fleeing war and violence in their homeland.