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Right Turn

By Jennifer Rubin



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Now, what about immigration reform?

By Jennifer Rubin

Neither Republicans nor Democrats are saying much about the defeat of the DREAM Act. It seems most Democrats would rather not bring up one of the Obama "losses" during the lame-duck session of Congress; Republicans are too busy grouching that START opposition melted like butter. The reactions of both sides suggest that keeping the immigration issue alive rather than solving the problem is uppermost in the minds of politicians.

And sure enough, Obama, who has had two years to make a concerted push for comprehensive immigration reform, is back to issuing platitudes. The White House released [a statement](#) earlier this week in which Obama "further reiterated his commitment to comprehensive immigration reform, pointing out that we can no longer perpetuate a broken immigration system that is not working for our country or our economy."

A lot of time has been spent arguing over border security, legalization and employer sanctions. But perhaps it is time to start from the other direction: a robust guest worker program. What? Let more people in! Yes, neither the left, which wants to hold out for more, nor the right, which has become as anti-immigration (or "pro-restrictionist," if you prefer) as organized labor, is enamored of a guest worker program. (That is odd, come to think of it, since conservatives are supposed to favor free markets and oppose union attempts to restrict the pool of available labor.)

But if we look at past efforts to establish legal guest worker programs, we find out that they help to stem the tide of *illegal* immigration and make the task of border security much easier.

[Daniel Griswold of CATO](#) wrote in the spring:

In the 1950s, Congress dramatically expanded the number of temporary-worker visas through the Bracero Program. The result was a 95 percent drop in arrests at the border. If Mexican and Central American workers know they can enter the country legally to fill jobs, they will be far less likely to enter illegally.

A workable temporary-visa program would allow border agents to concentrate their efforts on intercepting real criminals and terrorists at the border. It would also reduce the temptation to hire illegal workers, in turn reducing the need to raid workplaces and impose national ID cards, employment verification systems, and other burdens on American citizens. . . .

A 2009 Cato Institute study predicted that a sufficient temporary-worker program would boost the real income of

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U.S. households by \$180 billion a year.

Conservatives would be wise to avoid inflammatory and unsupported arguments that immigrant workers, whether legal or not, abscond with Americans' jobs. [Writing in the Albany Government Law Review](#), Griswold elaborated:

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By facilitating the growth of such sectors as retail, construction, landscaping, restaurants, and hotels, low-skilled immigrants have enables those sectors to expand, attract investment and create middle-class jobs in management, bookkeeping, marketing and other areas that employ native-born Americans.

The experience we have with guest worker programs comes from the

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restrictionist." There are plenty of us (the majority, I'd say) who favor immigration, we just want it done legally. Being in favor of the rule of law does not make one anti-

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