

From: To:



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- [Comments RSS](#)
- [Wordpress](#)

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- [May 2006](#)
- [April 2006](#)
- [March 2006](#)
- [February 2006](#)
- [January 2006](#)
- [December 2005](#)
- [November 2005](#)
- [October 2005](#)
- [September 2005](#)
- [August 2005](#)
- [July 2005](#)
- [June 2005](#)
- [May 2005](#)
- [April 2005](#)
- [March 2005](#)
- [February 2005](#)
- [January 2005](#)
- [December 2004](#)
- [November 2004](#)
- [October 2004](#)
- [September 2004](#)
- [August 2004](#)
- [July 2004](#)

Illegal Immigration: The Solution Is Simple

May 16, 2006
[Vox Populi](#)

By Timothy D. Naegele

Every American is an immigrant, or his or her ancestors were immigrants. Even the American Indians are descended from those who crossed the Bering Strait—or the “Bering land bridge”—according to anthropologists. America is the world’s only true melting pot, with people here from every other country on the face of the earth. Indeed, that is one of its strengths. Yes, we disagree and we squabble and we even discriminate, but we are a nation of immigrants, and we pull together and bury our differences when times get tough or 9/11s occur. Then, we are all Americans, white or brown or black or whatever the color or religion or political persuasion.

My ancestors came from Germany, Scotland, Ireland and England, and the heritage of most Americans is equally diverse. The spouses of my daughter and son have one parent who is of Mexican ancestry, and so the story goes throughout this great country. For me, however, the immigration issue is simple, and its solution is equally straightforward. All illegal immigrants must be deported now, or as soon as humanly possible; and if workers are needed to fill their jobs, they should be drawn first from Americans who are here legally and willing to work, and then from the lists of those from other countries who have been waiting in line patiently to come here. The latter group should

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- [December 2003](#)
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be admitted first, and today's illegal immigrants should go to the back of the line—if they decide to apply at all, once they have been sent back to their countries of origin.

That may seem harsh to some people, but no other solution is fair and just. I met a lovely Irish woman in Dublin 23 years ago when she was 23 years old; and we traveled across the Atlantic for many years to be together, before she joined me here in the States. Each of us made 12 trips, with some of them lasting as long as three weeks; and both of us got to know and appreciate Ireland and the United States even more during our times together. Among other things, I came to appreciate my country, as seen through the eyes of an immigrant. I have old friends from Germany and other countries too, and I have seen America through their eyes as well, which is always enlightening and generally very positive.

My German ancestors, a husband and wife who had 16 children, landed in New York on September 18, 1849; and in 1860, the husband served with his fellow Minnesotans in the Union Army. The assimilation had taken only 11 years, but he was proud to serve; and I am sure many other immigrants felt that way who served with the Confederacy. An Irish ancestor of mine first came to the States in 1850; and an English ancestor came almost a century before, in 1760. I am not entirely certain when my Scottish ancestors came here, but my mother's maiden name was "Duncan" before she married my father, and it is my middle name. I am proud of all legal immigrants; and I am equally proud of those of Mexican and Hispanic heritage.

What I found when my Irish love moved to California to live with me at the end of 1996 was that she could not get a job because she did not have a "Green Card." She wanted to work, but she could not. The U.S. had a lottery for Irish immigrants, and her sister applied on a whim and received a Green Card, so she came too and got two jobs, but my Irish love could not work at all. Could she have found work anyway, and used a phony Social Security number and ID like so many illegal immigrants? Sure she could have, but neither of us was willing to take the risks involved.

We played by the rules and she was never able to work, and finally she got homesick and returned to Ireland. We did everything legally and it got us nowhere. She did not overstay her visas, and she did not work illegally, and she is in Ireland today. Why should illegal immigrants from Mexico or any other country be treated differently than she was? Why shouldn't they be required to wait in line just like she did? Why shouldn't they be arrested and deported just like she would have been if she had broken the laws?

Having been born and raised in Southern California, I love its Mexican

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and Spanish heritage, and Spanish architecture is my favorite, and I love Mexican food, and some of the hardest workers whom I have ever met are Hispanics. They are wonderful people; however, all immigrants should be subject to the same rules that my Irish love adhered to, or no one should be required to obey those laws. It is just that simple. No frills—the same rules for every immigrant, regardless of where he or she is from. Fundamental fairness requires that; and we owe it to all who have come to this country legally and who have contributed so much to our heritage.

I have watched President Bush's speeches on the subject, and I have seen the demonstrations on TV, and I have listened to the debate. However, I am fed up with the fact that no politician is willing to do what is right. Again, from my vantage point, the issue is simple and its solution is straightforward. There is no mystery about what needs to be done. Whether any of our politicians will have the courage to do the right thing remains to be seen, but I am not optimistic. If they fail to do so, the problem will fester for generations to come, and immigration will be an area of the law that applies to some people but not to others, which is wrong and fundamentally unfair and unjust.

Finally, how much does the plan outlined by President Bush before a national television audience on May 15, 2006, differ from what I believe must be done? The first objective of his plan calls for this country to secure its borders, using the National Guard to strengthen and supplement our Border Patrol; and I agree with that as long as the Guard remains in place to effectively shut the border to illegal immigrants, criminals, drug dealers, and terrorists. The second objective is to create a temporary worker program. I have doubts about such a program, and believe it would be best to eliminate temporary workers altogether, and replace them with Americans who are willing to work, or immigrants who are seeking entry to the United States legally and have been waiting patiently to get in.

The third objective is to hold employers to account for the workers they hire, and I agree with that as long as it is enforced vigorously. The fourth objective is essentially amnesty for those illegal immigrants who are here already, and I disagree with that. The president's fifth objective is described as recognition of the fact that "we must honor the great American tradition of the melting pot, which has made us one nation out of many peoples." Few Americans disagree with that; however, it can be achieved best by legalizing only those immigrants who followed the rules, not those who ignored this nation's immigration laws.

At best, the president's plan would close our southern border, but do nothing about our northern border; and it would stop employers from hiring illegal immigrants, which might send them scurrying back to their countries of origin, to get in line and come here legally. Thus, actual deportation would work in tandem with attrition, and the goals that I believe are necessary might be achieved over time. However, any notion of amnesty is a mistake, as is the idea of a temporary worker program. While many of the president's proposals constitute steps in the right direction, they do not go far enough.

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