

## Commentary

### Dan Popeo: Border issue needs action, not words



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#### WASHINGTON -

With all the talk about securing our borders, I'm reminded of the immortal words of that old American philosopher Gabby Hayes: "Sayin' it don't make it so." How many times have we heard our leaders promise to secure our borders, only to fail us time and again?

(AP)

A man works on the construction of the U.S.-Mexico border fence dividing Nogales, Ariz., right, and Nogales, Mexico, on Tuesday. A bill drafted by a bipartisan group in Congress and backed by the White House calls for tightening border security, granting legal status to nearly all of the estimated 12 million undocumented workers and increasing penalties for employers who hire illegal workers in the United States.

Incredibly, the latest version of "immigration reform" provides for fewer than half the miles of additional fencing along the border that were promised in earlier legislation. You can pass all the laws you want, but none of it will work unless we protect our borders and stop the flood of illegal immigrants — more than 12 million to 20 million and counting — which is overwhelming our communities and putting our nation at risk to terrorists and drug smugglers.

Americans deserve an answer to why our government hasn't secured our borders and has failed to enforce our immigration laws over the last two decades. A recent House of Representatives Homeland Security Subcommittee report noted that "law enforcement authorities along the U.S.-Mexico border are outgunned and outmanned by drug smugglers armed with automatic weapons, grenade launchers, bazookas, improvised explosive devices and state-of-the-art communications and tracking systems."

Illegal aliens are responsible for a wave of brutal gang violence in our communities. The congressional report also noted a growing concern "about terrorists using Mexican drug and alien smugglers as cover to cross the border."

So what's the response of our government to all of this? Ask dedicated U.S. Border Patrol agents Ignacio Compean and Jose Ramos, each of whom was recently prosecuted by the Department of Justice and thrown into prison for more than 10 years for violating the "civil rights" of a major drug smuggler, who was slightly wounded during his capture.

Border security is so lax that in some places it's hard to tell where Mexico ends and the United States begins. What once was a problem only for our border states is now plaguing communities throughout the country.

Studies show that illegal immigrants cost American taxpayers more than \$10 billion a year in services such as Medicaid, food assistance programs, free school lunches, federal aid to schools, and our law enforcement, prison and court systems. Over the next few decades, the costs are projected to be \$2.5 trillion! Some legacy for our children.

Because of the federal government's abdication of responsibility to enforce our immigration laws, small towns, such as Hazleton, Pa., are forced to take desperate measures, such as making it unlawful to rent

housing to illegal aliens, only to be challenged in court by the ACLU and their activist allies.

And if illegal aliens are caught, often they're simply released. If deported, they're allowed to cross the porous border again and again. Indeed, the government's "catch and release" policy gives illegals up to half a dozen chances to violate our laws before triggering any enforcement proceedings.

It should come as no surprise, then, to learn that three of the men arrested and accused of planning to kill soldiers at Fort Dix, N.J., have been here illegally for many years, despite being stopped by police some 50 times!

While the federal government is quick to "throw the book" at border agents trying to protect our border, that same prosecutorial zeal does not extend to aliens convicted of violent crimes.

In a pending Supreme Court case, federal officials have lined up in support of a Mexican national convicted in 1994 of raping and murdering two teenage girls in Houston. Every court that has reviewed the case has determined that the defendant, Jose Medellin, received a fair trial and was justly sentenced to death.

Although not an American citizen, Medellin nevertheless received all the protections afforded to those in our criminal justice system — including Miranda warnings and a fair trial before an impartial jury.

But now, years after his conviction, Medellin is asking the Supreme Court to overturn his conviction claiming that the arresting officers should have told him, under the Vienna Convention treaty, that he had a right to contact Mexican consular officials following his arrest.

Despite sound rulings by the Texas courts against Medellin, the Justice Department is opposing Texas prosecutors and asking the Supreme Court to order the Texas court to completely reopen Medellin's case.

Our priorities have really become skewed when our government's concern for the rights of convicted murderers from Mexico trumps the rights of the U.S. Border Patrol, while U.S. taxpayers are forced to pay the huge tab to support millions of illegal aliens across our country.

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