

**By KAREN WEINSTOCK**

An immigration memo written by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), intended for White House adviser Karl Rove, recently arrived instead on the fax machine of a Democratic congressman. The memo, which was intended to be confidential, focuses on the politics of immigration.

Smith, a vocal immigration restrictionist, is a member of the subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims.

In the memo, Smith states: "Immigration needs to be considered in the context of: (1) media bias, (2) animosity toward the president and (3) the feelings of the Republican base. All three should be considered when deciding how to proceed on immigration legislation."

Smith goes on to assert that enforcement of current laws "should come first to satisfy the increasing public demand for border security." He then writes that "Liberals can easily and accurately be painted as opposing enforcement."

Effective enforcement is a byproduct of a consistent and responsive legislative process. Legislation is created in order to provide for a public need, and should therefore be periodically re-evaluated to keep up with the evolving needs of a dynamic society. Liberal opposition is not to enforcement, but to the perpetuation of an outdated and ineffective legislative regime that makes true enforcement impractical.

Immigration legislation has not kept pace with the ever-changing realities of the open market's demand for labor or the increasing demands of our national security. As a result, there are an estimated 15 million undocumented im-



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migrants who live and work in the United States. Most of them are otherwise law-abiding taxpayers who are an integral part of American society. Only a handful of these immigrants is considered a threat to national security.

Strictly enforcing immigration laws would mean deporting all undocumented immigrants, an unrealistic goal for any administration - Republican or Democrat. Such enforcement would have a devastating effect on hundreds of thousands of American businesses and families, causing lasting damage to the American economy and to the image of America as a humane and welcoming leader of the free world.

More disconcerting is the huge distraction such a task would be to law enforcement agencies across the country. Even if the government knew where 15 million or more undocumented immigrants live, there is no possible way to physically deport that many people.

En-masse deportation would bring many sectors of the U.S. economy to a screeching halt, with no available workers in such critical industries as construction, agriculture and hospitality (these industries accounting for 9 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product, according

to the Commerce Department).

It is no secret among employers that U.S. citizens are unwilling to work in these low-paying, labor-intensive jobs. Employers cannot replace these workers because there is no feasible legal way to bring unskilled foreign workers here. Consequently, the cost of doing business will rise and result in prices skyrocketing for everything from residential construction to hotel rooms.

Clearly, stricter enforcement of current immigration laws is not a true solution to the underlying dilemma. We must first fix our immigration laws and provide means for legalizing and documenting the majority of people who live and work here. Only then will enforcement work. Stronger enforcement now with no system to bring unskilled workers will have little effect, since there is such a strong demand in the United States for these workers and there are so many workers who are willing and able to come here, legally or otherwise.

Our national security will only be enhanced by comprehensive immigration reform designed to control - not stymie - the influx of people who wish to live and work legally in the United States by properly identifying them and making sure they are not criminals or terrorists.

Getting tough on enforcement without legalizing the people who are already living here will have little effect on security. Smith and his restrictionist colleagues need to ask themselves if scoring political points is worth leaving the root causes of illegal immigration unaddressed.

**Strict enforcement would cause lasting damage to the American economy.**

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