



How to Secure the Border: STPRA's Action Plan

Seal the border first! This has been the rallying cry of a huge cross section of Americans who are concerned about illegal immigration from Mexico. Their demand is valid and justifiable; they just may not realize the best way to pursue it.

When people chant “seal the border first”, many probably envision some sort of fence or wall that extends from Brownsville to San Diego, with armed guards standing on platforms every few hundred feet, ready to swoop down and capture anyone daring to breach the barricade. Those people are not realistic about the geography of our border with Mexico, nor the vast economic disparity between the two countries, nor what history has taught us.

A physical barrier alone has never worked, and even less so if it is hundreds or thousands of miles long. A wall certainly didn't stop everyone from crossing from East Germany to West Germany. In fact the largest wall ever built, the Great Wall of China, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, designed to stop the marauding Mongols from the north, never worked.

Why do walls and fences not work? Human beings construct them and human beings control them. Humans will always find a way, if there is a strong enough incentive, to go over, under, around or through an artificial barrier. If they can't do it with ladders, tunnels, blow torches, explosives, hot air balloons or catapults, they'll do it by finding weak human links—bribing guards, finding or causing disabled equipment, or exploiting lapses in manpower and surveillance. In the case of the United States, with our extensive coastlines, boats are always an option for circumventing our land-based borders.

So how, then, do we seal our borders? The fact is that, at least for the imaginable future, we will never be able to literally seal our borders. As long as people have an incentive to come across and we also maintain pathways for legitimate travel and trade with neighboring countries, completely sealing our borders to people crossing illegally is impossible. The day that no illegal drugs enter the country is the day that the border is sealed.

Does that mean we have no options? No, of course there are ways to address the problems we face. We should continue our efforts to physically prevent people from crossing the border. We should use more border guards, surveillance cameras, fences, drones, and any other technology that may be effective. We should continue to beef up south-bound inspections for cash, weapons



and ammo and we should enforce anti-money laundering laws in order to hamper cartel operations.

But we must not make the mistake of thinking that these actions alone will ever secure our border to an acceptable level. **The only possible way to adequately manage our borders is to reduce the incentive for people to cross them.**

Effectively managing our borders by reducing the incentives to cross them will be a huge accomplishment at a huge price, but a price that will be worth paying. There is simply no other alternative.

The only reasonable way to reduce the incentive for people to cross the border, beyond eliminating the demand for drugs (a whole other related issue), is to tighten restrictions on who can work in the United States; and the only way to tighten the restrictions on who can work here is to create and enforce a regulatory system for all workers. To qualify to be a part of the system, anyone in the United States who is not a citizen and who wishes to work here should be required to apply for **a tamper-proof identification card**. (Issuance of these ID cards will probably have to be limited to citizens of selected countries. Others will not have the option of working here legally.)

Employers should be required to hire only those workers who have complied with the ID system and employer participation in E-Verify should be mandatory. Applicants for the ID card will be screened for criminal records and health status, particularly for those people carrying TB and other communicable diseases. Applicants should have to prove citizenship in countries eligible for participation in the ID system and should have to list verifiable residential addresses in the United States.

Once the ID system is put into place, the federal government can realistically and justifiably begin enforcing immigrant hiring laws with employers. No real effort has been made to enforce existing immigration laws because they are almost totally unenforceable from any standpoint, not the least of which is shutting down or at least damaging many sectors of the American economy.

By regulating the right to work in the United States in a realistic and practicable fashion, the incentives to cross the border illegally will be greatly diminished for most people who want to come here simply to work. In other words, people who want to legitimately work in the US will choose to come in through the new legal ID system. Most of the remaining people choosing to enter the US illegally will be those who wish to come for criminal purposes. Once these two



classes are defined and separated, law enforcement will be in a position to successfully manage and even control our borders.

The tamper proof ID system will take care of not only new arrivals, but also those approximately 12 million people who have already entered the country illegally. The IDs will be made available to family members who can prove residence in the United States dating back to a specified time before the IDs were made available. Once these residents gain their IDs, just as in the old **Bracero Program**, they will be able to come out of the shadows and be participants in the communities where they reside on this side of the border. They will also be able to move freely back and forth across the border, taking money and expertise back to their families and home communities, thereby strengthening the social and economic fabric of those distressed countries.

As counter-intuitive as it may first seem, we have actually helped create the horrible situation that now exists in Mexico. When we started to tighten border security after 9-11, we made it much more difficult for individuals to come and go freely across the border. We thereby helped set up a system where only human smugglers in cartels, with their sophisticated equipment and mordida connections, could get people across the border.

No longer does the average worker have the option of coming across by himself or with a group of friends and relatives. He now has to sell his soul to the cartels, probably packing in a load of drugs, to get their help in crossing the border. Once across, he must stay because of the expense and danger of going home. He may have also gotten hooked into the drug running business and/or a violent gang.

If he is doing legitimate work, he will often bring his family into the US for permanent residence because he will not otherwise be able to see them again. Women trying to cross are often raped, brutalized and even killed.

A guest worker program, similar to the Bracero Program, is the solution. Setting up such a program, with a tamper-proof ID system, will be a challenge, but not an insurmountable one and certainly not an optional one. Here is what a guest worker program will accomplish:

- Separate those who want to work legitimate jobs from those who are involved in criminal activity
- Give law enforcement a fighting chance to catch criminal immigrants
- Improve public health



- Give Homeland Security realistic immigration laws that are enforceable with employers
- End the incentive for American employers to underpay immigrant workers, thereby eliminating the unfair advantage that foreign workers have over American workers
- Provide American businesses with the workers they need to sustain the economy, filling jobs that Americans won't do
- Provide a legal entry method so that workers do not have to submit to drug cartels or gangs to cross the border
- Eliminate the need for workers to cross private property, endangering themselves and the property owners
- Get immigrant labor out of the black market, thereby putting those workers in tax programs, including social security
- Allow foreigner workers to return regularly to their home countries to take back money and expertise for their communities, helping to stabilize the social and economic fabric of those countries

A guest worker program with a tamper-proof ID system should be enacted now. There should be no other issues on the table. A path to citizenship for foreigners outside of current law should not even be considered. That issue is totally irrelevant to the immediate best interests of the citizens of the United States and our neighbors to the south. It would also be unfair to those who have legally applied for citizenship. Current U.S. residents who comply with the ID process should have neither an advantage nor a disadvantage in applying for citizenship.

We do not need totally comprehensive immigration reform. We need a guest worker program.

Mexico is falling apart. Americans are scared and frustrated, and rightly so. The federal government must act and act immediately.