

It's not personal, it's just business: A non-partisan solution for our unauthorized immigrants

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The president's chief of staff is once again denigrating immigrants. In an interview last week, John Kelly spouted off a number of bleak characterizations. "In the countries they come from, fourth, fifth, sixth-grade educations are kind of the norm," Kelly said. "They don't speak English; obviously that's a big thing. They don't integrate well; they don't have skills." Kelly has previously berated unauthorized immigrants that didn't apply for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program as "too lazy to get off their asses."

Where is Kelly getting this from? Certainly not his immigrant roots, as it is well known that Kelly's maternal grandfather, an Italian immigrant, never spoke a word of English and yet we all see how well his succeeding generations turned out. Even better: A 2015 report from the National Academy of Sciences negates Kelly's key assertions. It found that today's immigrants are integrating as smoothly as ever and they are learning English as fast as or faster than they have in the past.

Even as Kelly was bashing unauthorized immigrants, President Trump was simultaneously excoriating his DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen for not doing enough to control our southern border — a completely bogus charge as illegal border crossings are at a 46-year low. So the Trump administration's unauthorized immigrant paranoia is simply not justified.

Besides, in purely business terms that Trump should appreciate, these unauthorized immigrants fulfill a basic economic principle — the law of supply and demand. There are over 20 million American homeowners, small businesses, factories and farmers that are in urgent and constant need of the journeyman skills in infrastructure construction, farming and food processing that many of these unauthorized immigrants have.

More alarmingly, from 2017 to 2027, the nation faces a shortage of 8.2 million workers. So what gives? Trump is stunting economic growth by not actively pushing for an immigration solution that legalizes a readily available supply of skills.

Meanwhile, after Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) reiterated his commitment to bringing an immigration bill to the floor before the midterm elections, the Wall Street Journal editorial board opined that solving the DACA problem should be a priority. Notwithstanding the various immigration proposals making their rounds in Congress, there is a particular non-partisan solution that is not getting sufficient attention on the Hill.

It's a proposal that enables unauthorized immigrants, including DACA beneficiaries, and their employers, to provide a vital revenue stream to the Treasury and become part of an overall immigration solution. More importantly, this is a straightforward third way approach that embraces neither mass citizenship, nor mass deportation. It is a non-partisan solution that is a win-win for both — immigration and our economy — and merits serious debate.

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