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Testimony to House Immigration Subcommittee * May 17, 2007
By John Andrews * Denver, Colorado

I'm John Andrews, former President of the Colorado Senate, now a senior fellow with the Claremont Institute. People in my state are self-reliant in their way of life, optimistic in their outlook, and welcoming to newcomers from anywhere in the world. We are not complainers, and we are not alarmists.

But we know a problem when we see one, and we expect a bargain to be kept. Right now millions of Coloradans see the invasion of illegal aliens as an urgent problem for our state, and we attribute that problem to the federal government's failure to keep its bargain with Americans everywhere for secure borders and the rule of law.

Amnesty for illegal aliens was supposed to fix this problem 20 years ago. It did not. Estimates today put the illegal alien population of Colorado at somewhere between 250,000 to 750,000 people – as much as 15 percent of the entire population.

Our schools, our health care system, and our criminal justice system are groaning under this burden. Our common culture and common language are fraying. We feel that Washington has let us down. It seems Congress and the White House just don't care.

Most of those individuals who broke the law to come here or stay here are probably good people with good motives. But we cannot be sure. Some may be enemy sleepers with deadly intent. Nor can we be sure how many of them are actually here, or what countries they came from.

I can tell you that their country of origin does not matter at all to my fellow Coloradans. What matters is their disruptive impact on our state – disrupting self-government, disrupting safe neighborhoods, disrupting affordable public services.

Feeling betrayed by federal inaction, Coloradans last year started a petition to protect affordable public services by restricting them to legal residents only, except in emergencies or by federal mandate. The petition was called Defend Colorado Now. I was one of four co-chairmen, Democrats and Republicans, Anglos and Hispanics, leading that campaign.

A study done for our group, based on documented statistics in the public record, found that illegal aliens were costing state taxpayers over \$1 billion a year through the extra burden on services -- and reducing family paychecks by another \$2 billion a year through lower wages. (See full study at www.defendcoloradonow.org.)

In 2005, Colorado voters had approved a ballot issue to raise taxes by about \$1 billion a year – which would not have been necessary if the federal government had kept its bargain for secure borders.

More...

In 2006 Coloradans set out to do what we could about the problem ourselves. Our petition fell short, but it did push the legislature into passing some of the toughest ID requirements and workplace sanctions of any state.

The legislature also asked voters to approve a lawsuit against the US Attorney General, demanding enforcement of federal immigration laws in order to give us some budgetary relief in the areas of health care, law enforcement, criminal defense and incarceration, and education. It passed by a landslide and the Colorado lawsuit is now in federal court. We're not holding our breath, but it shows the public impatience on this issue.

I grew up in a Colorado mountain town called Buena Vista. This week there was a national news report alleging that radical Islamists have a paramilitary training camp at Buena Vista. I wonder if some of them are illegal aliens, similar to the Fort Dix cell that was recently broken up. That's the risk we take with an unsecured border in the middle of a global war.

As the father of a Denver police officer, I have to take such threats seriously. One of my son's fellow officers, Donald Young, was brutally murdered by an illegal alien two years ago this month. My son has a T-shirt that says "Never Forget." Coloradans have not forgotten, but we can't solve this problem without your help in Congress.

The help we need is for you to build the fence and secure the border, period. No amnesty for lawbreakers. No so-called comprehensive solution for cheap votes and cheap labor. Just stop the invasion.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my state's concerns.

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Defend Colorado Now

A Compendium of Illegal Immigration Data

On March 28, 2006, Defend Colorado Now released a study entitled A Compendium of Illegal Immigration Data*, by Donald Rice. The following is an overview of the study:

Last November, Colorado engaged in a contentious debate over Referenda C and D seeking the authority for the state government to keep some of the funds scheduled to be returned to the taxpayer under the Tabor Amendment. At the same time, without debate and with little discussion by the media or the political leaders, illegal immigration in Colorado was costing Colorado taxpayers two or three times the amount so bitterly fought over last November.

Now for the first time, Donald Rice sets forth in one study the most authoritative collection of estimates of the costs to Colorado taxpayers and workers of illegal immigration. Using only the most authentic of sources, Rice found that illegal immigration cost Colorado over \$1 billion in 2006 and promises to do so in growing amounts, next year and the year after, infinitum. This is a cautious, fact-based study which Defend Colorado Now feels significantly understates the magnitude of the problem because illegal immigration has so dramatically increased and the original studies necessarily cited by Rice are years behind reality and understate the real cost. Studies look in the rear view mirror and always understate a growing problem. Like a flood on the South Platte, by the time we get the report from Douglas County, a much larger flood has hit Denver.

That said, the Rice study gives us a scholarly, rock-solid study with unimpeachable statistics.

A silent invasion of illegal aliens has spread throughout Colorado, providing some employers with "cheap labor" but imposing immense costs on Colorado taxpayers and placing serious new burdens on our school systems, health care systems and law enforcement. A burden that has no moral or legal justification!

Rice estimates (p. 8, line 55) that the total cost to Colorado of illegal immigration for Medicaid, K-12, education and incarceration is \$1,025,518,839 per year. That number includes \$64,531,983 of State General funds spent on Medicaid for illegals.

Rice also estimates an additional economic loss to Colorado workers of \$2 billion (\$2,030,807,803) caused by the downward drag of illegal labor to wages paid by Colorado employers.

We submit this report as a scholarly, conservative, bottom-line economic impact analysis that while it understates the full magnitude (DCN estimates there may be twice the number of illegal immigrants in Colorado than the figures Rice necessarily uses), clearly shows that illegal immigration is costing Coloradoans in reduced paycheck and increased taxes.

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MEDIA INCURIOS ABOUT ILLEGAL ALIEN CRIMES

By John Andrews

What ever happened to investigative journalism? As a young White House staffer in 1974, I saw it bring down a president. In the past month, our lazy journalistic watchdogs couldn't even sniff out the main story between two would-be governors. Granted, Bill Ritter's victory over Bob Beauprez was so broad and deep that no great difference ultimately resulted from the October storm over plea bargains and leaks. Still that episode is worth reviewing, not as a rehash of the campaign, but as a case study in media attitudes.

You remember the endless stories about a federal agent with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) who allegedly gave Beauprez information on a criminal alien who had benefited from a plea bargain allowed by Ritter when he was district attorney. The media compliantly played up the Democrat's attack on his Republican opponent for using the information in an ad. And they had a field day with the FBI leak investigation.

This was grossly hypocritical, because if the leak had come to them, they would have both used it and protected their source. It also revealed an odd disinterest in the information itself and its relevance to the former DA's qualifications for higher office. Why weren't the media energetically digging up this seamy stuff on their own? Instead of joining one side's "shoot the messenger" ploy against the other, a truly vigilant press would have been (and still should be) probing into what other skeletons are buried in the data on illegal alien crime. Try these questions for starters:

- What percentage of arrests for DUI offenses in 2005 were illegal aliens? Recall that Justin Goodman of Thornton was killed in 2004 on his motorcycle by an illegal alien driver who had six prior DUI and driving violations in Boulder and Adams counties. The man had never been referred to ICE for deportation.
- Does the Denver City Attorney's standing policy of not asking questions in court about the legitimacy of Mexican driver's licenses presented by defendants have any consequences for the law-abiding citizens of Denver? Recall that the man who killed police officer Donnie Young had used an invalid Mexican driver's license to avoid jail in Denver municipal court only three weeks before.
- Why is it that a full year after the Colorado Attorney General stated that one-quarter of Colorado's outstanding fugitive homicide warrants are for people who have fled to Mexico, no newspaper has asked how many of the individuals named in the warrants were illegal aliens with prior arrests? (In Los Angeles County, there are over 400 such fugitive warrants.)
- How are sanctuary cities like Durango, Boulder and Denver responding to SB 90, the new state law passed in 2006 to outlaw sanctuary cities? What is ICE doing to respond to SB 90?
- If Denver received federal reimbursement for the incarceration of over 1100 illegal aliens in 2004, why were only 175 deported when they finished their terms? What subsequent crimes did the other 925 criminal aliens commit?
- After the murder of Officer Donnie Young in May 2005, the Denver ICE office renewed its routine surveys of the Denver jail population to identify illegal aliens subject to deportation. How many criminal aliens have actually been deported out of the Denver jail since then, compared to prior years when such checks were not being made?
- Nationally there are over 100,000 criminal aliens being sought by ICE "fugitive teams." How many of these criminals are believed to be in Colorado, and how many full-time ICE agents are looking for them?

Investigative journalism on these questions would require the cooperation of law enforcement, it's true. But reporters routinely tap those sources (and protect their identities) when pursuing a story. After all, "the public has a right to know." Then don't we also have a right to know the criminal histories of illegal aliens, the consequences of plea bargaining, and the social cost of the special status afforded illegals by the sanctuary policies in Denver and other cities?

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