U.S. Social Security For Mexicans?

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Social Security, the so-called "third rail" of American politics, has just become more incendiary. The Bush Administration is proposing a change that is even more controversial than offering younger workers the opportunity to invest a small percentage of their Social Security taxes.
Everybody knows that Social Security is facing a massive shortfall in a few years when the baby-boom generation starts to retire. Higher taxes, reduced benefits, or allowing some measure of privatization are the alternatives that need to be worked out by bipartisan consensus.

The Bush Administration has just thrown a monkey wrench into a harmonious solution. A deal is in the works to add to the bulging Social Security rolls many thousands of Mexicans who are working in the United States, both legally and illegally.

This idea would be very costly to U.S. taxpayers. It's bad politics, it undermines the rule of law, and it invites a new wave of illegals to come across our border in search of taxpayer benefits.

Vicente Fox's success as Mexico's President is threatened by his country's terrible poverty. So he has a very ambitious plan to deal with it: export his poverty to the United States.

Fox encourages poor and desperate Mexicans to risk all kinds of hardships to cross the U.S. border illegally, often paying their life savings to a criminal "coyote," making a deal to transport illegal drugs, or enduring life-threatening thirst in the Arizona desert. Fox even toyed with a plan to give them Survival Kits to ease their pain.

If the illegal aliens manage to elude U.S. border guards and escape death on the highway in crowded vans or trucks driven by inexperienced drivers, many manage to land in various locations far away from Mexico, such as Colorado, Iowa or Georgia. They can then hope to get hired by a U.S. employer willing to close his eyes to how they got so far away from home.

Nevertheless, the illegals are told by Fox and other Mexican officials to "think Mexican" first and send as much as they can scrape out of their pitiful paychecks back to relatives in Mexico. According to a Pew Hispanic Center and Inter-American Development Bank report, Mexicans in the United States will send $13 billion this year to relatives in Mexico.

As soon as George W. Bush was elected president, Vicente Fox started pressuring him to legitimize the status of the some ten million illegal aliens who are in the United States, plus give amnesty to many illegals by reviving a loophole in immigration law called 245(i). Those plans were sailing briskly until 9/11, the day that the American people woke up to the dangers of open borders, and Fox was forced to move to an incrementalist strategy.

Mexican consulates in the United States started issuing an identification card, called matricula consular, to Mexicans illegally living in our country. By definition, this card should prove that the holder is in the

United States illegally, but it began to be accepted by police, banks and even driver's license offices in some states as though it were a valid I.D.

New York State and New York City, however, citing security reasons, just announced that they will not recognize the matricula consular as a valid identity card.

The deputy White House press secretary has just confirmed that the Social Security Administration has begun discussions with Mexico about an agreement to allow Mexicans to receive U.S. Social Security benefits. One plan is to allow Mexicans, who were not employed in the U.S. long enough to collect U.S. Social Security benefits, to count the time they worked in Mexico as part of the mandatory 10 years or 40 quarters.

The most expensive plan is to provide benefits to the estimated 5 million Mexicans who are working illegally in the United States after having supplied fake Social Security numbers to their employers. "Our actuaries are working on the numbers," said Social Security spokesman Jim Courtney.

Acquiescing in Vicente Fox's demands would put hundreds of thousands of Mexicans onto the rolls of the U.S. Social Security system just as the first wave of baby boomers starts getting retirement checks. Already there is talk of an addition to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City to handle 37,000 claims anticipated in the first year.

The Bush Administration claims that these plans would promote "totalization" of U.S. and Mexican retirement systems and develop a positive relationship between the two countries. But offering Social Security benefits to people who knowingly violate U.S. immigration laws would create a powerful new incentive for more illegals to enter the United States.

If foreigners work legally in the United States and pay Social Security taxes, they are entitled to receive the benefits they earned. But U.S. taxpayers should say "no" to Mexico's attempt to shift its social welfare burdens onto the U.S. taxpayers.