E-Verify Is a "Shovel-Ready" Solution

by Phyllis Schlafly March 13, 2009

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"Never let a serious crisis go to waste." With that pithy motto, coined last November by White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, President Obama has committed over four trillion dollars of America's wealth to further his goal of "remaking America" along the lines of socialist Europe.

"Never waste a good crisis," echoed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last week in Brussels. She told an audience at the European Parliament that "the United States has been negligent in living up to its responsibilities" to curb our use of energy, but at this "propitious time" of crisis "we can actually begin to demonstrate our willingness to confront" the alleged problem of global warming.

For every real or imaginary "crisis" facing this country and the world, it seems, liberals have a new trillion-dollar government program ready to go. Every crisis, that is, but one. When it comes to the crisis of illegal immigration, liberals pretend that nothing can be done, and they complain that every proposed solution is ineffective, expensive, or intrusive.

Contrary to the liberals' no-can-do approach toward our wide-open borders, at least three "shovel-ready" solutions are readily available to close dangerous gaps in our border security. The three solutions are E-Verify, No-Match Letters, and US-VISIT.

E-Verify is a real-time, web-based verification system run by the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration. E-Verify can determine with great accuracy the authenticity of the personal information and credentials offered by employees and new hires. In most cases, verification occurs almost instantly.

Approximately 99.4 percent of lawful workers receive immediate positive verification, while the other 0.6 percent of lawful workers receive positive verification after a brief visit to their local Social Security office. E-Verify is inexpensive for employers to use, costing between $4 and $20 for each employee screened.

E-Verify has been proven to successfully verify employees queried through the system within five seconds. Opponents of this program, to date, have been unable to find a single instance in which legal, U.S. citizens have lost their jobs due to an E-Verify error.

While E-Verify is meant to catch illegal aliens at the point of initial hiring, No-Match Letters are a means of identifying those who already hold jobs illegally.

After tabulating wage reports, Social Security has identified employers having at least ten, a hundred, or even 1,000 or more stolen or fictitious Social Security numbers. Thousands of wage reports include such obviously fraudulent numbers as 000-00-0000 and 999-99-9999.

Soon after 9/11, conscientious lower-level federal employees sent nearly a million No-Match Letters to employers that had reported at least 10 phony Social Security numbers on their employee wage reports. That caused a firestorm of overreaction from the usual suspects, and the Bush Administration stopped the program.

With the collapse of "comprehensive" amnesty legislation in the summer of 2007, the Bush Administration again prepared to send out a batch of a half-million No-Match Letters to employers who were still submitting many false or stolen ID numbers. A federal district judge issued a nationwide injunction against mailing the letters, and then-DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff (a former federal judge himself) meekly obeyed.

The third important tool available to secure our borders is the long-delayed US-VISIT system for tracking the entry and exit of tourists, students, and temporary workers. It's estimated that 40 percent of all persons illegally present in the United States actually entered with legal documents, but simply failed to go home when they were supposed to.

US-VISIT should have caught most or all of the 9/11 hijackers before they carried out their murderous conspiracy. There is simply no way we can protect our national security unless we can reliably know who is entering and leaving our country each day.

Congress originally authorized US-VISIT in the Illegal Immigration Reform Act of 1996, but its completion was delayed by 12 years of foot-dragging by the Clinton and Bush Administrations. The Obama Administration shows no sign of prioritizing this critically important tool.

Word has leaked that a new "comprehensive" amnesty bill will come before Congress in September. That's why the Democratic leadership has repeatedly refused to extend E-Verify beyond the end of the current fiscal year.