Republicans Debate Guest Workers

By Phyllis Schlafly

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Why do so many Republicans want to bring foreign guest workers into our country? Even when candidates say they want to "secure the borders" or crack down on illegal immigration, some Republicans just can't let go of the notion that our economy can't grow without foreign workers who supposedly do "jobs that Americans won't do."

The subject exploded in the last two presidential debates, where all five candidates (Trump, Cruz, Rubio, Kasich, and Carson) made statements or have supported proposals to increase the number of guest workers. Trump and Cruz, at least, are trying to disavow their earlier positions, but Rubio and Kasich have refused to recant their support for guest workers.

In the Feb. 25 CNN debate in Houston, John Kasich and Ben Carson both suggested that the 11-plus million illegal aliens could remain in this country as guest workers after they "come out of the shadows." Donald Trump defended his practice of hiring foreign workers to staff his Palm Beach club during the peak season, which is perfectly legal under the H-2B visa program. (Each year, Donald's club uses about 70 of the 66,000 available visas.)

In the March 3 Fox News debate in Detroit, Trump defended the hiring of foreign workers by the technology industry in Silicon Valley, saying "we have to have talented people in this country." Trump seemed to be buying the industry's propaganda that American college graduates aren't smart enough to work in the computer industry.

Ted Cruz saw an opportunity to criticize Trump's support for foreign workers, but moderator Megyn Kelly quickly reminded Cruz that "not long ago you proposed quintupling the number of these foreign worker visas." Indeed, Cruz's amendment to increase the number of H-1B visas to 325,000 per year was rejected by the Senate Gang of Eight in 2013.

Shortly after the debate, Trump issued a statement clarifying that when he said that America needs "talented people" with "brain power," he wasn't referring to foreign workers on temporary H-1B work visas. Although H-1B visa candidates are supposed

to be “high-skilled,” most have only mediocre talents and are used primarily to fill entry-level positions at large corporations.

The misuse and abuse of H-1B visas was exposed in a hearing held on Feb. 25 before a Senate subcommittee chaired by Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL). The subcommittee heard from one of the 250 skilled technical employees of the Walt Disney Company in Florida who were laid off after being forced to train their foreign replacements recruited under the H-1B program.

As Sen. Sessions pointed out in his opening statement, “technology companies will cut at least 330,000 jobs this year. There is no shortage of highly qualified working American professionals, nor is there a shortage of American STEM college graduates each year.” Only about half of our science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) graduates find STEM jobs.

In his post-debate statement, Donald Trump said “I remain totally committed to eliminating rampant, widespread H-1B abuse and ending outrageous practices such as those that occurred at Disney. I will end forever the use of H-1B as a cheap labor program, and institute an absolute requirement to hire American workers first.”

Ted Cruz has also become more critical of guest workers, co-sponsoring a bill with Sen. Sessions that would suspend all H-1B visas for 180 days and impose stiff new requirements on companies that use them. Cruz’s bill, the American Jobs First Act, would open job opportunities for American college graduates by eliminating visas for foreigners who have less than a Ph.D. degree.

Marco Rubio, on the other hand, remains a co-sponsor of the industry-supported I-Squared bill (S. 153), which would relax requirements and triple the number of H-1B visas to 195,000 a year. It would eliminate the current per-country cap, which means that many more of the visas would go to workers from India.

The wages of working Americans have been stagnant for many years, and part of the reason is our high levels of immigration (both legal and illegal) and the many different guest worker programs. Tell your member of Congress to tighten up or eliminate those programs, and support presidential candidates who put American workers first.

Don’t let anyone tell you that we can’t deport the people who came illegally or stayed in our country after their temporary visas expired. It’s well documented that President Dwight Eisenhower peacefully removed at least 1 million illegal aliens in June 1954 and sent them back to Mexico, including many who got the message and left on their own.

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