Don't Give Criminals A Sanctuary

by Phyllis Schlafly May 5, 2004

Google Ads are provided by Google and are not selected or endorsed by Eagle Forum

A favorite argument of those who support amnesty for illegal aliens is: current laws can't be enforced (like Prohibition and the 55-mile-an-hour speed limit) so we might as well adjust to reality. That's about like telling a woman, you can't fight your rapist, so relax and enjoy it. There must be a better solution.

Any comparison of the invasion of illegal aliens with Prohibition or the 55-mile speed limit is totally false. The American people wanted both those laws repealed, but the American people, by a wide margin, want our immigration laws enforced.

That's why Senators Jeff Sessions (R-AL) and Zell Miller (D-GA) held a hearing April 22 on their Homeland Security Enhancement Act (S.1906) to promote cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. It's a reflection on the peculiar times we live in that we even need such a law, but the failure of federal and state law-enforcement personnel to cooperate to protect us from crimes committed by illegal aliens is as dangerous as the now-famous failure of the CIA and the FBI to talk to each other about terrorists.

Rep. Charlie Norwood (R-GA) is the sponsor of a similar bill called the CLEAR Act (H.R. 2671) to give state and local authorities the power to routinely enforce federal immigration laws. The bill has 120 co-sponsors and is one border security bill that has a chance to pass this year.

The numbers tell us why this cooperation is essential. Our fewer than 2,000 federal immigration agents cannot possibly cope with the problems caused by 10 million illegal aliens. We don't want to hire a half million new federal agents.

The answer is to use the police officers who walk their beat and drive our highways and who come into contact with illegal aliens every day. The feds desperately need the eyes, ears, and cooperation of our 650,000 state and local police officers.

The open-borders lobby is vehemently opposed to this sensible cooperation. Many cities and other local units of government have adopted so-called "sanctuary" laws or policies to forbid local police to ask anyone whether they are legally in the United States.

Police officers who suspect violations of immigration law are often prohibited from detaining illegal aliens or contacting federal immigration authorities. Sanctuary laws even forbid police to report immigration violations to federal authorities.

We've seen numerous examples of illegal aliens who were stopped by the local police but then set free to commit their crimes instead of being deported, such as the notorious gang rape of a mother of two in Queens by three illegal aliens who had been arrested numerous times but never turned over to the immigration agency. The most famous example is D.C.-area sniper Lee Malvo, who was caught by local law-enforcement in Seattle, identified as an illegal who should be deported, but then set free by the feds.

Three of the 9/11 hijackers, including the ringleader Mohammed Atta, had been stopped and ticketed for significant traffic violations, such as driving without a license and speeding at 90 m.p.h. Thousands of innocent lives could have been saved through closer cooperation between local police and immigration authorities.

The Los Angeles police department is handcuffed by Special Order 40, which prohibits the police from asking anyone they arrest about his immigration status unless the suspect is already charged with

committing a felony. The police may not notify immigration authorities about an illegal alien picked up for minor violations, even though it's well known that enforcing laws against minor crimes often prevents a major crime.

The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act makes it unlawful for any municipality to restrict its employees from reporting illegal aliens to federal authorities, and allows the federal government and local police to work together under specific written agreements. A few local agencies have reached such agreements, and Virginia just became the third state to give its state police more authority to detain illegal aliens.

Former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, trying to defend his city's sanctuary policy, fought against that law all the way to the Supreme Court. He lost in court, but Mayor Michael Bloomberg's "don't ask, don't tell" rule continues to skirt around the 1996 law.

There are 400,000 illegal aliens walking our streets who are under standing deportation orders (known as absconders), of whom 80,000 are criminal aliens and nearly 3,800 are from countries with known Al Qaeda presence. The L.A. police department has more than 1,200 outstanding warrants for illegal aliens on homicide charges.

The foreign born are 30 percent of federal prisoners. The big-city gangs are mostly foreign born, and their viciousness is illustrated by the 16-year-old who last week lay in wait and killed a California police officer as the boy's admission ticket to the 12th Street gang, which has ties to the Mexican Mafia.

The CLEAR Act and the Homeland Security Enhancement Act will give our beleaguered law enforcement officials more tools to combat terrorists, gangs, and other criminals. Tell your Member of Congress to act now.