Voters Won't Fall For Bait-and-Switch

by Phyllis Schlafly
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Americans are not naive enough to believe the sensational headline and opening paragraphs of news accounts about Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff's recent testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee. He was reported to have said that Homeland Security will now "Return every single illegal entrant — no exceptions."

That's a correct quote, but Chertoff's prepared text proves that he certainly won't start tomorrow to expel and exclude "every single" illegal alien who crosses our border. His statement refers only to the Other Than Mexicans (OTMs) whom our undermanned Border Patrol agents actually catch.

Those are the aliens who are the beneficiaries of a Bush Administration racket called "catch and release." OTMs are caught, charged as immigration law violators, and then immediately released on their own recognizance (which allows them to disappear into the American population).

Chertoff admitted that 130,000 OTMs received this treatment in 2005 alone. He acts as though he just discovered this travesty when in fact "catch and release" has been government policy for years.

Furthermore, Chertoff didn't promise immediate action; he is just "taking steps" to change it, "reengineering" our removal process, and expecting "significant progress in less than a year." Meanwhile, Chertoff admitted that "catch and release" acts as an enticement for additional illegals to enter our country.

Chertoff told the Senate committee that he already has "aggressive efforts underway" to ensure that employers who violate current laws "face appropriate punishment." Really? At least ten million illegal aliens are now working in the United States, but only three employers in the entire nation were fined in 2004.

In his Saturday radio address, President Bush bragged that "we've doubled the resources for work site enforcement since 2004." Does that mean we can expect six employers to be fined next year?

Obviously, Chertoff has no plans to do anything about the ten million illegal entrants who already entered illegally and are now living across the country from Maine to California.

It's hard to take Chertoff's promises seriously when they are prefaced by the false braggadocio that "President Bush has placed the utmost importance on border security." The latest 28-question opinion survey circulated to donors by the Republican Party does not include even one question about illegal aliens or immigration, further manifesting the Bush Administration policy of sweeping this issue under the rug.

Both in signing the giant Homeland Security spending bill and his Saturday radio broadcast, President Bush for the first time gave us some tough talk about getting "control of our borders," but tucked at the end of his border-security rhetoric was a renewed demand that we offer American jobs to "willing workers from foreign countries." The most accurate way to describe his salestalk is bait-and-switch.

Bush didn't put any numbers limit on the "willing workers" he wants to invite to join the U.S. job market. Pew Research recently reported that 40 million Mexicans would like to come to the United States if they had the opportunity.

Conservative Republicans in Congress have wised up to the Administration's bait-and-switch plan. More than 80 House members recently sent a letter to the President stating that "the American people need to see that the current laws against illegal immigration are being enforced before any guest-worker program can be considered."

The letter criticized the government's failure to enforce existing immigration laws. As just one example, the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act mandated a national exit-entry tracking system for all aliens but, nine years later, the system is still not near completion.

Illegal aliens are responsible for a terrible crime wave that includes the spread into our cities and suburbs of criminal gangs from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. The gang called MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha), with an estimated 10,000 members, deals in narcotics, gun trafficking, prostitution, and murder by machete cuttings after torture and mutilation.

U.S. taxpayers are paying a heavy burden of costs to provide illegal aliens with health care, public schools, in-state college tuition, housing subsidies, and treatment for Third World diseases. The failure to enforce our immigration laws results in a general disrespect for all laws, plus the destruction of the private property of Americans along our southern border.

The President can no longer get by with saying "trust me." His record of failure to enforce our immigration laws is too scandalous and too costly for us to be satisfied with mere plans to do better sometime in the future.

Congressional candidates preparing for the 2006 elections should beware: amnesty, guest-worker, and willing worker are all red-flag words that voters find offensive.

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