Two Dubai-Ports/Harriet Miers Moments Coming

by Phyllis Schlafly September 19, 2007

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It looks like we will soon have two more Dubai-Ports/Harriet Miers moments. President Bush has climbed out on the edge of a limb and it is about to get sawed off because he is clearly flouting the wishes of the American people.

While Bush was using the platform of his departure from Sydney, Australia, to blast "protectionism" and pledge his commitment to "free trade," his Department of Transportation was proving that he values unfair trade with foreign countries above protection of American safety and jobs.

On September 6 at 9 p.m., the Bush Administration opened up all U.S. highways and roads to Mexican trucks and drivers. That gave the green light to the first 38 of up to 100 Mexican trucking companies, and nobody knows how many thousands of Mexican trucks will eventually drive on our roads.

Bush thumbed his nose at the U.S. House, which voted overwhelmingly and bipartisanly (411 to 3) on May 15 and again on July 24 (by voice vote) to prohibit the entry of Mexican trucks. White House pressure prevented a vote in the Senate.

For 25 years, Mexican trucks had been restricted to a commercial zone of about 25 miles in the United States, where their loads were transferred to U.S. trucks. Bill Clinton, bless him, kept this restriction in place.

U.S. law (since 1971) requires that commercial drivers be able to "read and speak the English language sufficiently to converse with the general public, to understand highway traffic signs and signals in the English language, to respond to official inquiries, and to make entries on reports and records."

We have no way of knowing if Mexican drivers are criminals or terrorists or drug peddlers or accident-prone since Mexico doesn't have nationwide criminal or driving-record databases. The professional Mexican drug smuggler who testified against U.S. Border Patrol agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Compean was a legally licensed Mexican commercial truck driver.

U.S. drivers are limited to ten consecutive hours of service, but Mexican drivers typically drive up to 20 hours a day. Even if Mexican drivers are now limited to 10 hours per day, nobody knows how many hours they are behind the wheel before reaching the border.

Big corporations are eager to have their made-in-Mexico-or-China-by-cheap-labor products delivered in the United States by Mexican drivers because they are paid 33 to 40 percent less than U.S. truckers. As Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) said, "commercial interests are being pushed ahead of the safety and security interests of the American people."

Only one or two percent of trucks coming across the border are inspected. The smugglers of illegal drugs, products and people can just consider it a cost of doing business that so few illegal loads will be caught.

The problem is not only the increased wear and tear on our highways that U.S. taxpayers will subsidize, and not only the crowding of our roads that will make driving less pleasant, but it's our worry about safety. Anyone who does much driving on our highways knows how crowded with big trucks our highways already are.

The other Dubai Ports/Harriet Miers moment will be the first anniversary on September 14 of the overwhelming (283-138) passage by the U.S. House of the Secure Fence Act. The Senate subsequently passed it 80-19, and President Bush signed it on October 26 in front of TV cameras.

This law ordered the government to build an 854-mile fence along our southern border. After one year, the Bush Administration has built only 18 miles.

This failure -- or refusal -- to obey the law makes us believe that Bush and Michael Chertoff do not intend to build the fence, and is a prime example of why the American people don't trust our government. The government could hire eight construction firms to simultaneously build 100 miles of the fence and offer a bonus for the company that first completes its hundred miles.

The only rational explanation of Bush's stubborn determination to override the wishes of the American people by opening up all our roads to Mexican trucks is that this is an essential part of his plan for the economic integration of the United States into a North American Community. The only rational explanation of Bush's refusal to build the fence is that he has no intention of stopping the flow of illegal aliens across our southern border.