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Border Patrol Agents Sentenced to More Than a Decade in Prison

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Making News—No Cause for Celebration

Overcrowded schools, congested highways, environmental stresses: We are a nation paving over its wildernesses while depending on our enemies for vital resources.

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Around the Country

With the effects of mass illegal immigration ravaging communities from coast to coast, local governments are deciding they can no longer ignore the problem and wait for the federal government to act. Almost weekly, states, counties and cities get aboard the train of jurisdictions deciding to act locally.

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Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta Addresses FAIR's Annual Meeting

As a young man, Hazleton, Pennsylvania, Mayor Lou Barletta dreamed of making a name for himself as a professional baseball player. A few seasons in the Cincinnati Reds farm system revealed serious impediment to realizing that dream — he couldn't hit a curve ball — leading team officials to suggest that he find another line of work.

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FAIR State Advisors Meet in Chicago

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From the Hill—Putting Immigration Reform Back on Track

Regardless of which political party controls the next Congress, America needs true immigration reform. Congress needs to complete the job of guaranteeing genuine border security, and once that is achieved, we can turn our attention to a much needed overhaul of the immigration system.

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Book Review—Patrick Buchanan's *State of Emergency* Warns that Mass Immigration Could be the Undoing of America and the West

"The idea of Western decline is hardly a new one," writes the Scottish-born historian Niall Ferguson in an essay in the October issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine. After laying out countless false alarms predicting the imminent demise of Western civilization over many centuries, Ferguson goes on to suggest that the decline of the West may already be well underway, following much the same path as the long, but steady decline of the Roman Empire that precipitated the Dark Ages.

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Reformer Corner—When Ron Woodard Speaks, North Carolina Listens

I became interested in immigration reform in 1986 while watching Dan Stein on CNN's Crossfire. Through FAIR I realized the immensity of the problems of mass immigration to America. In 1988 I returned to my home state of North Carolina and realized that even in the South, we were dealing with the consequences of mass immigration.

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In all, spending on border security and immigration enforcement will total \$21.3 billion in FY 2007, an 11 percent increase over the previous year. Also included in the spending package is money to hire an additional 1,500 Border Patrol officers, bringing the total to 14,800. The FY 2007 budget also calls for 6,700 new detention beds to fulfill the Department of Homeland Security's pledge to end the catch and release program.

For advocates of true comprehensive immigration reform, the package of border security enhancements passed in the final hours of the 109th Congress is encouraging, although it falls far short of what we know is needed to secure our nation and curb mass illegal immigration. In spite of an all-out effort on the part of the Bush Administration and Senate leaders to link improved immigration enforcement to a massive guest worker amnesty provision, what was approved in the end were enforcement-only measures, albeit modest ones.

The enhanced border security measures agreed to by both houses of Congress in late September represent a significant shift in momentum that provides reason for guarded optimism in the 110th Congress that convenes in January. In the spring of 2006, it appeared as though guest worker amnesty advocates had gained the upper hand, culminating in passage of the Senate bill in May.

However, something remarkable happened in 2006 that stopped the guest worker amnesty juggernaut in its tracks. Americans from all walks of life and all regions of the country responded to what amounted to a sell-out of their interests in a way that even the politicians in Washington could not ignore.

Many of you who followed events in Washington through FAIR's daily email alerts responded in a big way, flooding congressional offices with calls opposing plans that would have resulted in a massive illegal alien amnesty. Rather than give in to pressure from the White House and the Senate to accept the guest worker amnesty giveaway, the House leadership held hearings around the country, exposing the Senate bill as a crass and disastrous capitulation to special interests.

The response was so overwhelming, in fact, that it affected the timing of the president's signing of the fence bill. Although the authorization was approved by Congress in late September, the Republican leadership of Congress held the bill back for several weeks before sending it to the White House for a presidential signature. The reason for the delay was to maximize the political benefit to the GOP in the November elections. [This newsletter was written before Election Day.]

With little else positive to campaign on, Republican leaders recognized that immigration enforcement is overwhelmingly popular with the voters, and they timed the president's signing of the border fence bill so that it would be fresh in people's minds when they headed for polls. The political gamesmanship associated with this one modest immigration enforcement measure illustrates the irony of how Congress and the Bush Administration have handled this issue. While they are fully aware of how politically appealing true immigration enforcement is to the American public, they have still been unable to muster the political courage to pass and enact all but a small portion of the reforms that are needed.

In a sense, the audacity of the Bush-Senate guest worker amnesty bill, together with the brazen marches and boycotts staged by illegal aliens and their supporters, awakened a sleeping giant. Almost daily, new segments of American society — American Hispanics, black Americans, unions — joined the effort to stop the surrender of American sovereignty and American jobs to the special interests, many approaching FAIR for guidance and assistance.

In 2007, FAIR expects to hit the ground running, building on the momentum of 2006 to promote the many urgently needed reforms that were left unfinished by the 109th Congress. The border security improvements agreed to by Congress in September must be followed by a package of interior enforcement provisions next year if we are to have a viable national strategy to curtail new illegal immigration and reduce the current illegal population through attrition. We can also expect the advocates for amnesty and guest workers to regroup and try again in 2007.

To maintain this positive momentum in 2007, we will once again need the active participation and financial support of FAIR members and activists. The immigration reform movement now has a broad and diverse coalition of support that can help us move closer to our common goal of an immigration policy that serves the interests of the American people.

Border Patrol Agents Sentenced to More Than a Decade in Prison

Politically Motivated Trial Meant to Discourage Other Officers

A federal judge in El Paso, Texas, sentenced Border Patrol Agents Ignacio Ramos and Jose Alfonso Compean to 11 and 12 years respectively, on October 20. The two officers were convicted this past summer for a 2005 incident in which they shot and wounded a Mexican drug smuggler, Osvaldo Aldrete-Davila, after he resisted arrest, assaulted them and then attempted to flee back into Mexico.

Aldrete-Davila had 800 pounds of marijuana in his SUV when he encountered Agents Ramos and Compean in February 2005. The Border Patrol officers, believing that their assailant was armed, fired at the suspect and wounded him. While any other law enforcement officers, serving in any other police department in America, would probably have received commendations if they had acted in a similar fashion to subdue a violent criminal, Ramos and Compean found themselves hauled before a federal court facing criminal charges.

The decision to prosecute the two officers and the harsh sentences handed down in October were meant as a clear signal to other Border Patrol agents not to vigorously pursue suspects. While the Administration's rhetoric is tough on border enforcement, in reality they have tied the hands of the Border Patrol, ordering them not to pursue people attempting to enter the country illegally. The case of Agents Ramos and Compean was clearly meant to place an exclamation point on this unwritten policy and drive home the message to other officers.

The prosecution of Ramos and Compean has generated a bipartisan response in Congress. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) has called for a Senate hearing on the matter, while a coalition of Republican lawmakers in the House, led by Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.), has publicly called for their convictions to be vacated and the case reopened in light of new evidence. FAIR, working with Rep. Jones's office, has helped draw national attention to the government's aggressive prosecution of Ramos and Compean, including organizing a Capitol Hill press conference for Jones and other members.

Supporters of immigration enforcement, including FAIR, have established a Web site, to generate public support for the two officers, as well as, to raise funds for their defense and to assist their families (www.JusticeForTheBorderPatrol.com). While Ramos and Compean need support from ordinary citizens, Aldrete-Davila has no such concerns. In addition to receiving immunity from the prosecution for testifying against the agents, he had his medical expenses covered courtesy of the American taxpayers and has been given the opportunity to pursue a lawsuit in this country for violation of his civil rights, for which he is seeking \$5 million in compensation.

Although Ramos and Compean have now been sentenced to long prison terms, FAIR and the other organizations and congressional leaders have vowed to continue their efforts to have their convictions overturned and the charges dismissed.

Making News

The following Op-Ed by FAIR President Dan Stein was published in the October 16 issue of *USA Today*.

No Cause for Celebration — Immigration-Fueled Population Growth Threatens U.S. Way of Life

Overcrowded schools, congested highways, environmental stresses: We are a nation paving over its wildernesses while depending on our enemies for vital resources.

Why?

Because Americans have been blindsided by a government-mandated mass immigration program that's fueling this nation's runaway population growth. This growth was neither planned nor expected, but we feel the consequences every day.

The population of the USA will reach 300 million this week on a relentless march to half a billion before 2050. That's because about 80% of the current population growth in the USA is due to immigration policies — immigrants legally admitted, illegal immigrants, and births to immigrants after entering.

Only a dramatic rollback in overall immigration can reverse these trends. The time to act is now.

Thirty years ago, the Rockefeller Commission could find no benefit from further increases in the size of the U.S. population. In 2006, it is hard to see how the massive government-mandated population growth of the past 30 years has improved life for most Americans. The addition of a staggering 100 million people since the late 1960s has accelerated virtually every environmental problem, exacerbated resource depletion, contributed to sprawl and congestion, and strained nearly all public services.

Many of our nation's opinion elite now seem intent on further acceleration. The Senate recently approved an illegal alien amnesty and immigration increase that would have resulted in at least 66 million new immigrants arriving in the USA in the next 20 years — and we'd hit a billion people before 2100. This is insane, and only a massive public outcry and strong opposition in the House prevented this from occurring.

Our population's future is entirely within our power to determine. Just as the government has mandated soaring overcrowding and congestion in the past several decades, it has the power to slow population growth by curtailing immigration and enforcing laws against illegal immigration.

It's time to talk about the purposes of immigration and its role in our national future. As responsible stewards for future generations, there is an urgency to consider how our decisions today will affect the nation they will inherit — before it's too late.

Around the Country

South Carolina

Faced with growing numbers of illegal aliens and taking a cue from neighboring Georgia, the South Carolina legislature is preparing a package of proposals to discourage illegal aliens from settling in the state. Leaders of the South Carolina legislature expect to have a bill ready to go in early 2007, modeled after laws enacted in Georgia earlier this year. Among other things, the South Carolina legislation would require people to show proof of legal residence to access most state benefits and services; require employers with state contracts to verify the legal status of their workers; authorize local enforcement of immigration laws; and require local jails to notify federal immigration authorities when they detain noncitizens. The forthcoming legislation is due in part to the efforts of local activist groups, such as Carolinians for Immigration Reform, which has worked hard to promote immigration enforcement efforts in the state. The group works closely with NC Listens, which achieved significant gains in 2006 in North Carolina and with FAIR. In addition to statewide efforts aimed at curtailing illegal immigration, York County, South Carolina, has decided to seek federal training for local law enforcement officer to identify and detain suspected illegal aliens.

Virginia

Talk about doing a political 180... In the summer of 2005, defying overwhelming public opposition, the Herndon, Virginia, City Council and Mayor decided to use public funds to create a day labor hiring center to accommodate the growing number of illegal alien workers who were crowding into the town. After a local election in May 2006, the mayor and all but one of the city council members who voted for the day labor site were turned out of office by the voters. In late September, Herndon announced that it had reached an agreement with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to have local police receive immigration enforcement training. The agreement makes Herndon the smallest city in America to receive such training.

Oklahoma

With a growing illegal immigration problem and an active and growing network of immigration reform organizations, Oklahoma is considering action to alleviate the burdens being imposed on the state. The Oklahoma legislature has appointed a legislative task force to look into the ways that illegal immigration is affecting state and local budgets and contributing to crime, and to recommend state action to deal with the problem. State Senator Daisy Lawler, who chairs the task force, argues that Oklahomans should not have to foot the bill for illegal immigrants. Oklahoma is one of the states in which FAIR has worked closely with local immigration reform groups, particularly, Immigration Reform for Oklahoma Now (IRON), to build a grassroots campaign for state action to control illegal immigration.

California

Escondido, a town just north of San Diego, has adopted local ordinances aimed at cracking down on illegal immigration, making it the first city in California to adopt such regulations. Similar to the ordinances being adopted around the nation, Escondido will suspend the business licenses of landlords who rent to illegal aliens. The local action was taken because city officials declared they could no longer foot the bill for illegal immigration and can no longer afford to wait for the federal government to take action.

Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta Addresses FAIR's Annual Meeting

"I Didn't Have a Choice," Says Mayor

As a young man, Hazleton, Pennsylvania, Mayor Lou Barletta dreamed of making a name for himself as a professional baseball player. A few seasons in the Cincinnati Reds farm system revealed serious impediment to realizing that dream — he couldn't hit a curve ball — leading team officials to suggest that he find another line of work.

Returning to his hometown of Hazleton, Barletta and his wife, Mary Grace, built a successful business and raised four daughters. A love for his community led him into local government, first as a member of the city council and more recently as mayor. That is where Mayor Barletta begins his story about the circumstances that led him to become America's best known small city mayor.

When Barletta became mayor of this city of about 30,000 people 80 miles from Philadelphia, Hazleton was a town in decline. Businesses were leaving town, city hall was plagued by corruption and the city was struggling to hold on to its residents. In a few short years, Barletta had turned Hazleton around and it was once again a thriving small city. That is, until the city began to experience an influx of illegal aliens about five years ago.

Suddenly, in a small town where people sent their kids to play in the parks and sat on the front porch with their neighbors, everything changed as a result of illegal immigration. Violent crime skyrocketed, houses shared by as many as 20 people popped up in the middle of family neighborhoods, and schools and emergency rooms were suddenly overcrowded.

After a long road back, "We were losing our city," Barletta told attendees at FAIR's annual Board of Directors and Board of Advisors dinner on September 30. Unlike a lot of other local officials who have refused to confront illegal immigration in their communities head-on, claiming that it is a "federal matter," Barletta acted to begin "taking our city back, because I didn't have any choice." Responsibility for controlling the nation's borders may rest with Washington, but making sure that kids could play in local parks, or that senior citizens could sit on their porches on a summer evening was his responsibility as mayor of Hazleton, and he was not about to shirk it.

After a particularly gruesome murder in Hazleton earlier this year, perpetrated by an illegal alien, Barletta decided enough was enough. With the support of the city council, he crafted a series of local ordinances designed to send a clear message that illegal aliens are not welcome in Hazleton. The local ordinances put business owners and landlords on notice that hiring or renting to illegal aliens would result in penalties imposed by the city and even to the loss of business licenses.

With the assistance of FAIR and the Immigration Reform Law Institute, the city refined the ordinances in September to withstand the inevitable legal challenges from the pro-illegal alien advocacy network and the ACLU. Barletta's appearance at FAIR's annual meeting was a way of showing his appreciation for the support that the organization has provided him and Hazleton as they seek a response to their illegal immigration problem.

A remarkable thing has happened in the relatively short time since he set out to take back the city, Barletta told the FAIR audience. Almost immediately, sometimes in the middle of the night, U-Haul trucks backed up to the houses filled with illegal aliens and rolled out of town. The Hazleton 'reverse migration' phenomenon is precisely what FAIR and other advocates for immigration enforcement have predicted would happen: illegal aliens began leaving on their own, almost immediately.

What is happening in Hazleton is a refutation of the assertions made by advocates for amnesty, that we cannot deport millions of illegal aliens so we have no choice but to give them amnesty. Hazleton's experience demonstrates that there is a clear alternative. Faced with a nationally enforced policy that makes it clear to illegal aliens that jobs, public services and even apartments will not be easily accessible to people who violate our immigration laws, many — perhaps even most — illegal aliens would decide to deport themselves.

While the federal government still isn't getting the message, apparently cities and towns all across America are. Standing in front of visual displays of newspaper headlines and appreciative letters from frustrated Americans all across the country, Barletta reports that he spends part of almost every day speaking to other local government leaders who seek his advice on replicating the Hazleton model in their communities.

Barletta may not have achieved stardom on the baseball diamond, but his strong and principled stand against an illegal immigration crisis that threatened to destroy his city has propelled him to national stardom. As Barletta addressed FAIR board members and activists in a Washington hotel ballroom, a crew from CBS's *60 Minutes* was filming his speech as part of a report they are doing about him and other courageous local leaders who are confronting a problem that has reached into every corner of America.

FAIR State Advisors Meet in Chicago

Critical to FAIR's strategy to bring about true comprehensive immigration reform is the establishment of a national network of grassroots organizations that, working together, will create pressure on government officials at all levels and in all regions of the country. With three full-time field representatives who meet with activists all across the country, FAIR works closely with local activist groups on a daily basis. From this elite group of activists, has emerged a leadership corps that advises FAIR on what is going on in their states and helps FAIR mobilize support for efforts in Washington.

To help make this leadership group even more effective, FAIR hosted the first State Advisors National Strategy Meeting on Oct. 14, 2006, bringing more than 50 key immigration reformers from across the country to Chicago to discuss strategy for the forthcoming year. The meeting provided them an opportunity to be briefed by FAIR about what is taking place in Washington, and for many FAIR staffers to hear directly from the people on the ground about what is going on in their states and what their concerns are. Most importantly, it allowed key state leaders to meet and interact with one another, trade information, and benefit from each other's experiences in working for immigration reform at the local level.

FAIR President Dan Stein kicked off the meeting with a "State of the Movement" address, explaining where we are today in the battle for immigration reform and enforcement, and the events of recent years that have brought us to this point. Dan was followed by Dale McGlothlin, Chief Operating Officer, who laid out FAIR's strategy for achieving sustainable success in 2007. The forum went on to provide the state advisors with a summary of legislative, legal and organizational activities that have taken place over the past year, and a sense of what it will take to hit the ground running in 2007.

Julie Kirchner, FAIR's Deputy Director of Government Relations/ Legislative Counsel, reviewed the legislative record of the 109th Congress and looked ahead to what might be expected in the 110th. She shared with participants a comprehensive security and enforcement checklist of what FAIR and the immigration reform movement will be working toward in 2007. This checklist may be obtained by contacting FAIR's Government Relations Department at info@fairus.org.

Among the developments of greatest significance to local activist groups has been the proliferation of ordinances aimed at dealing with illegal immigration at the local level, and the use of the legal system to protect the rights of law-abiding citizens. Michael Hethmon and Leah Durant of FAIR's legal affiliate, the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI), reviewed the state and local immigration reform legislation enacted in 2006, and discussed with the state advisors strategies for arming their state and local legislators with tools to combat illegal immigration at the local level. In addition, they detailed the Model Illegal Immigration Relief Ordinance IRLI has designed to implement local enforcement in a manner that is both lawful and effective. Hazleton, Pennsylvania recently passed an ordinance based on this model which has gained national attention. Information on IRLI's model ordinance can be found at www.irli.org.

FAIR's regional field directors, Rick Oltman and Sandra Gunn, worked with the state advisors on key organizational issues that will help each of the grassroots groups to function more effectively in their own endeavors, and interact with one another as part of a national network of immigration reform organizations. While Rick laid out effective strategies for creating new organizational links within their states, Sandra provided a case study of how these strategies have led to several labor unions breaking with the AFL-CIO's support for an illegal alien amnesty and adopting pro-enforcement resolutions of their own.

National Field Director Susan Tully closed the meeting with a crowd energizing presentation on how to get active and activate others, calling on participants to "go forth and multiply!"

FAIR's State Advisors National Strategy Meeting was well received by all who participated. Some have called it informative, others energizing. For FAIR staff, it was a rewarding experience to meet and share ideas with activists across the nation whose dedication makes this battle for comprehensive security and enforcement possible.

From the Hill

Putting Immigration Back on Track

by Rep. Tom Tancredo

Regardless of which political party controls the next Congress, America needs true immigration reform. Congress needs to complete the job of guaranteeing genuine border security, and once that is achieved, we can turn our attention to a much needed overhaul of the immigration system.

The specter of amnesty was dangerously close to becoming a reality in the 109th Congress. President Bush proposed, and the Senate approved a broad-based amnesty for the twelve to twenty million illegal aliens currently in the United States. That legislation would have proven to be disastrous for a system that is already dysfunctional, corrupt and in desperate need of an overhaul. Thankfully, that legislation was blocked by an enforcement-minded Republican-controlled House of Representatives. Without question, however, amnesty advocates are already gearing up to renew their push in what they hope is a more "amnesty friendly" 110th Congress.

Border security is a goal that unites all Americans, and Congress needs to finish that job. Building a 700-mile fence is only a first step, and no one believes a fence is a panacea. We need to see substantial progress on border security before tackling more complex matters.

The first goal of any comprehensive reform must be to enforce the law. This means creating reliable and verifiable identification documents and to give employers a simple, efficient and mandatory method to determine the eligibility of any job applicant.

A second component must be full implementation of the US-VISIT program to provide a secure and reliable identification and tracking system for all foreign nationals entering and leaving the country. That program has suffered too many delays and must be completed.

A third component must be a total overhaul of the Citizenship and Immigration Services division of DHS, the agency that processes applications for Legal Permanent Residency and all other benefits. Numerous GAO reports and other investigations have shown massive corruption and incompetence, and until that agency is reformed it would be both foolish and dangerous to burden it with new responsibilities.

A fourth component must be to end "birthright citizenship" for children of illegal aliens and non-immigrants. Federal judges have created this presumed right by misinterpreting the 14th Amendment, and Congress must correct this error.

A fifth goal must be to clarify the role of state and local law enforcement agencies and enlist them in the task of assuring the viability and integrity of our immigration system. The CLEAR Act sponsored by Representative Norwood (R-Ga.) should be enacted as a key part of immigration reform.

Beyond these reforms of our immigration laws and policies, we must rethink our relationship with Mexico, a nation that habitually makes many demands of the United States but refuses to accept its own responsibilities for controlling its side of the border. We can be a partner with Mexico in helping solve its problems, but we cannot continue to allow America to be simply a convenient export market for Mexico's social and economic problems.

You can write Congressman Tancredo at 1130 Longworth HOB, Washington, DC 20515-0606 or call his district office at (720) 283-9772.

Book Review

Patrick Buchanan's *State of Emergency* Warns that Mass Immigration Could be the Undoing of America and the West

"The idea of Western decline is hardly a new one," writes the Scottish-born historian Niall Ferguson in an essay in the October issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine. After laying out countless false alarms predicting the imminent demise of Western civilization over many centuries, Ferguson goes on to suggest that the decline of the West may already be well underway, following much the same path as the long, but steady decline of the Roman Empire that precipitated the Dark Ages.

"Nothing changed Rome more than immigration. The same is true of the West today," states Ferguson, as if writing the preamble to Patrick Buchanan's new book, *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America*. As the title suggests, and as other students of history have also picked up on, the mass immigration — legal and illegal — currently occurring in America and Europe, poses an existential threat to the very civilization that lifted humanity out of the Dark Ages.

Buchanan's predictions of an American culture and identity being undone by immigration are not new. A convert to the immigration reform movement in the late 1980s, Buchanan began sounding the alarm during his 1992 challenge of President George H. W. Bush in the Republican primaries. While many dismissed his warnings in 1992, events of the past 14 years have demonstrated that the current wave of migration to the U.S., and to Europe for that matter, are unlike any previous immigration experience. Far from being the agenda of a kooky fringe element, the idea of reconquest of the American Southwest and the creation of an Aztlan nation, was prominently displayed by millions of illegal aliens all across the United States as they marched earlier this year to demand amnesty.

A parallel immigration crisis is currently underway in Europe, as that continent with its declining birth rates and bloated social welfare programs, is attracting an unprecedented wave of migrants from North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. In much the same way that Mexican migrants to the U.S. are fed the idea that they are merely retaking land that once belonged to them, Islamic immigrants in Europe are being indoctrinated with the belief that they are reclaiming lands that were once part of a far-flung empire that included large portions of Europe.

On both sides of the Atlantic, Buchanan warns, many immigrants are not coming to become part of the nations in which they are settling, but rather to take advantage of economic and social welfare opportunities, while maintaining loyalties and allegiances to their native lands or cultures. The failure of the political leaders of the United States to react appropriately to mass illegal immigration amounts to a dereliction of constitutional duty that, in his view, the current occupant of the White House could be guilty of impeachable offenses.

In the final chapter of *State of Emergency*, aptly called "Last Chance," Buchanan lays out a series of policy reforms that could avert the demise of the nation. Among the steps he calls for are a 10-year moratorium on all immigration; a 2,000-mile double fence along the U.S.-Mexico border; a crackdown on employers who hire illegal aliens, including the elimination of business tax deductions for wages paid to illegal aliens; and an end to automatic birthright citizenship for the U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants.

Reformer Corner

When Ron Woodard Speaks, North Carolina Listens

I became interested in immigration reform in 1986 while watching Dan Stein on CNN's Crossfire. Through FAIR I realized the immensity of the problems of mass immigration to America. In 1988 I returned to my home state of North Carolina and realized that even in the South, we were dealing with the consequences of mass immigration.

Within a few years I began attending FAIR meetings in Washington, D.C., and participated in FAIR lobbying events at the Capitol. In the late 1990s our state Democratic leadership began to pander to illegal aliens with the media chiming in, and no one was speaking out to present the other side of the story. After 9/11 I decided I had to take a more active step and started NC LISTEN, a North Carolina-based immigration reform 501(c)(3) group.

As our group was getting off the ground, we received assistance from FAIR's staff, who made frequent visits to the state. We contact members of Congress from North Carolina on important legislation and engage them. I speak regularly to groups on the issue of immigration reform, and I appear frequently on talk radio stations and in the media around the state.

Political activism is sometimes an arduous task, but the commitment of those who work with and support NC LISTEN has paid dividends. In the most recent session of the General Assembly, under pressure from NC LISTEN and other groups, meaningful immigration reform legislation was passed, culminating a four-year effort on the part of NC LISTEN activists. In North Carolina, the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is no longer accepted as valid ID; all newly hired state employees must be screened by using the Basic Pilot Program of SAVE; and state and local law enforcement officers are authorized to enforce immigration laws.

With this important victory in the win column, NC LISTEN plans more actions to leverage our efforts. A statewide Civitas Poll in August ranked immigration control as the issue most important to North Carolinians at the state level. With political momentum and strong public support we intend to move forward with legislation that would require workers on state contracts be screened by using Basic Pilot, bar illegal aliens from receiving non-essential and non-emergency government services, and rescind drivers licenses earlier issued to illegal aliens, to name a few.

More activities at the county and city level are planned, such as promoting the training of local law police in immigration law enforcement, known as 287g. Four county Sheriffs Departments in the state are either signed up or are in the process of signing 287g agreements. Persistence is still going to be required, but momentum is now on our side. With our united effort and FAIR's continued leadership, we will prevail in achieving real immigration reform.

