FAIR Investigates the Border!

In April, FAIR sent an investigative team to southern California to get a firsthand look at the condition of the border fence and the general environment along the U.S. – Mexico border. What we saw was stunning.

There is toxic waste pouring through Tijuana, Mexico, into the United States, shutting down roads in California state parks. Border Patrol agents in the area are suffering from respiratory issues by working near it and many have sustained chemical burns. Several members of FAIR’s own team even experienced problems breathing.

Aside from the environmental concerns, it was very clear that the primary border fence in the region is in desperate need of repair. But according to the National Border Patrol Council, there are no state contractors who want to bid to fix the fence because they are afraid they will never get another state contract. The open border lobby that controls California has made it clear border security is not their priority.
the dictates of SB 54 and cooperate with ICE, as federal law and common sense require.

Within a few weeks, the anti-SB 54 rebellion spread south to the more heavily-populated and higher-profile areas of the state. In mid-March, the city of Los Alamitos in Orange County approved a measure exempting itself from the constraints imposed by SB 54. In “a conflict between two governing documents — the Constitution of the United States and the state constitution, itself,” the city is obligated to comply with the U.S. Constitution, “which makes it clear that federal law preempts state law,” declared councilman Warren Kusumoto. The city also decided to join the U.S. Department of Justice’s (DOJ) lawsuit against the state of California.

In short order, other jurisdictions enacted their own policies defying SB 54 and signed on as plaintiffs in the DOJ’s law suit. These include the Orange County cities of Mission Viejo, Aliso Viejo, Huntington Beach, Yorba Linda, and Fountain Valley, and Escondido in San Diego County. But by far the biggest and most important party to the resistance to SB 54 is Orange County, the state’s third largest county, with some 3.2 million residents. In late March, the County Board of Supervisors voted to join the federal lawsuit.

The Orange County rebellion is led by Supervisor Michelle Park Steel, herself a legal immigrant from South Korea. Writing in a Wall Street Journal op-ed, Steel explained that California’s defiance of federal authority over immigration threatens the structure of our constitutional republic and endangers public safety.

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“Instead of protecting American citizens, politicians in Sacramento have prioritized the safety of alien criminals. They are provided privileges that American citizens don’t receive—all while endangering innocent people,” she wrote.

The resistance to SB 54 from within California originated from the grassroots and from responsible public officials who recognize their duties to the U.S. Constitution and the people who elected them. Their efforts are being aided by FAIR’s legal affiliate, the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI), which assisted a number of the jurisdictions in preparing an amicus brief in support of the DOJ lawsuit. IRLI also filed a second brief on behalf of the National Sheriffs’ Association, Advocates for Victims of Illegal Alien Crime (AVIAC), and Fight Sanctuary State.
After touring the U.S.–Mexico border in California, FAIR's team then began to speak with local and city leaders about the ongoing rebellion among cities and counties to the states' “sanctuary law.”

FAIR obtained an exclusive interview with Escondido Mayor Sam Abed, a legal immigrant from Lebanon. Abed disputed the belief that sanctuary policies encourage cooperation between the immigrant community and law enforcement. FAIR’s interview took place the day before Escondido became the first city in San Diego County to vote to join the lawsuit filed by the Justice Department against California’s sanctuary laws.

“Harboring and protecting illegal criminals and giving them more rights than American citizens is immoral, illegal, and unconstitutional,” said Abed. “There is more awareness about what sanctuary policies do to the immigrant community. I think more people in the immigrant community are opposed to SB 54.”

Next, FAIR engaged the grassroots opposition to SB 54, appearing with KOGO Radio talk host Carl DeMaio at a live event in Encinitas, California. FAIR Press Secretary Joe Gomez was interviewed by DeMaio. DeMaio is spearheading a coalition against California's sanctuary law which has gained a considerable amount of local news attention.

Stay tuned for more on FAIR's visit to Southern California and the U.S.–Mexico border at fairus.org and immigrationreform.com

Here are some photos from the trip:

Polluted waterway from migrants crossing the border.

FAIR's Joe Gomez interviews Christopher Harris of the National Border Patrol Council.

FAIR staffer interviews illegal alien crime victim Ingrid Lake.
Taking steps to address a growing illegal immigration crisis at the southern border, President Trump signed an official proclamation on April 4 ordering that National Guard troops be deployed to provide support for the Border Patrol. The president’s move came against a backdrop of increasing illegal border crossings – the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) estimates that about 1,000 illegal aliens are entering daily (that’s about 365,000 for the year, for those who continue to claim the border is under control) and a 203 percent increase in illegal border crossings between March 2017 and March 2018. In addition, an organized illegal alien “caravan” of Hondurans vowing to reach the United States with the intent of exploiting loopholes in our asylum and anti-trafficking laws was making its way through Mexico.

In a White House briefing, DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen explained, “Despite a number of steps this administration has taken...we continue to see unacceptable levels of illegal drugs, dangerous gang activity, transnational criminal organizations and illegal immigration flow across our border.” Despite the evident threats posed by the growing insurgence of illegal aliens and the fact that in recent years both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama deployed National Guard units to serve in support roles, President Trump’s proclamation was greeted with howls of protest by many leading Democrats and increasingly militant mass immigration lobby. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown was first out of the box, declaring that she would refuse to allow National Guard troops from her state to participate in border enforcement efforts, even before she was asked.

The White House made clear that the use of National Guard units to augment the efforts of the Border Patrol and ICE is only a stopgap measure intended to deal with the immediate crisis. Administration officials insisted that a long-term solution requires the active participation of Congress. “Traffickers and smugglers know that these individuals cannot under U.S. law be easily removed in an expeditious way back to their country of origin and so they exploit the loophole,” declared Secretary Nielsen. Only Congress has the authority to close these loopholes, though despite indisputable evidence that they are contributing to the threats posed to the nation, Congress has shown little inclination to act.

Also contributing to the surge in illegal immigration has been amnesty proposals put forth by the Trump administration and Congress. Though newly arriving illegal alien minors would not have qualified for the proposed DACA amnesty—although one egregious proposal offered by Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) would have set the cutoff date for June 30, 2018—the message sent is that bringing children into the United States illegally will eventually be rewarded.

In addition to sending the National Guard to the border, the administration also applied diplomatic pressure to the government of Honduras to prevent more people from attempting to “caravan” to the U.S. border, and on the government of Mexico to prevent large numbers of illegal aliens to transit across that country in an effort to illegally enter the United States.

The presidential proclamation was followed up by an even stronger statement from U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions. On April 6, the Department of Justice announced a “zero-tolerance policy for criminal illegal entry” to the United States. Under the zero-tolerance policy, Sessions instructed all U.S. Attorneys “along the
Iowa

On April 10, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds signed legislation outlawing sanctuary policies throughout the state. Among other things, Senate File 481 requires that all jurisdictions in the state honor ICE detainer requests and hold deportable aliens who are arrested for other offenses for up to 48 hours. Local jurisdictions that violate Iowa’s anti-sanctuary law could face a cut-off of certain state funds. The legislation was handily approved by both houses of the Iowa Legislature. On April 3, the Iowa House approved the measure by a 55-45 vote. A day later, the Iowa Senate approved the measure 28-19 on a party line vote. An estimated 40,000 illegal aliens are believed to be living in Iowa.

California

It would be a gross understatement to say that California has been putting out the Welcome Mat for illegal aliens. They’ve been rolling out the red carpet, and illegal aliens have been following it right to the nearest DMV office, where since January 1, 2015 newly hired staff and extended business hours have been in place ready to help them obtain California driver’s licenses. According to the California DMV, they issued their one millionth illegal alien license in late March. There is still work to be done, however. The California Legislature’s goal is to put licenses into the wallets of 1.4 million illegal aliens – a goal that may be helped along by the state’s radical sanctuary policies. One unintended consequence of doling out driver’s licenses to illegal aliens has been the toll on California’s environment and worsening traffic congestion. According to the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, bus and light rail ridership has dropped to its lowest level in more than a decade. But, in California, everything takes a back seat to accommodating illegal aliens.

Connecticut

Connecticut already has a law that limits the ability of state and local authorities to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement authorities. But that was not enough for illegal alien activists and some members of the State Legislature. A bill introduced by State Rep. William Tong (D-Stamford), would have required all law enforcement officers to ignore civil detainer requests unless accompanied by a judicial warrant, except under very limited circumstances. FAIR’s State and Local Legislative Department, teamed with local activists, worked closely with members of the Connecticut Legislature to oppose the proposed sanctuary policy. Together, they helped get the bill killed. In an April 5 note to FAIR’s State and Local director, State Rep. Rob Sampson (R-Wolcott) reported that H.B. 5543 had effectively died when the legislative session ended without action on the bill. As Sampson noted, in Connecticut, “I take that as a victory.”
Good News: The 2020 Census will Include a Question about Citizenship

The Department of Commerce, which oversees the decennial Census required under the Constitution, announced in March that the 2020 survey will include a question about whether respondents are U.S. citizens. A similar question appeared on Censuses up until 1950.

Immigration is, and has been, the most important demographic phenomenon in the United States since about 1970. Legal and illegal immigration adds about 15 million new residents to this country every decade. As such, understanding this phenomenon and quantifying the number of residents who are not U.S. citizens is vital information that is necessary for federal, state, and local governments to make informed decisions.

The Census is more than just a decennial head count. The Census determines how representation will be apportioned over the coming decade. And, since each state’s allocation of seats in the House of Representatives determines the number of Electoral Votes it has, reapportionment could affect the outcomes of close presidential elections.

It’s not just about politics, either. It’s about how federal dollars are allocated to state and local priorities. The Census provides a formula for where limited federal funding for important public works projects go, and where it doesn’t go.

By all reasonable accounts, gathering information about how immigration is affecting the nation should be completely non-controversial. But when it comes to matters relating to immigration, nothing is simple, straightforward, or logical. Advocates for mass immigration immediately protested the inclusion of a question about citizenship, raising bogus concerns that asking people to check a box on an anonymous form will deter them from complying. In addition, states that tend to gain political representation and federal dollars, like California and New York, immediately filed suit to prevent the question from being included.

The hysterical response from mass immigration advocates and far left politicians lead one to wonder what they are afraid of. So long as we willfully avoid collecting important information about the impact of mass immigration on American society, they can continue to offer fact-free arguments that mass legal and illegal immigration is unambiguously beneficial. Once we have clear data that provides a picture of who benefits and who is harmed by large-scale immigration, the pressure to act on that information increases. The Census question may also shed light on the true number of people who are in the country illegally, even though the official estimate of the number of illegal aliens living here has been mysteriously stuck at about 12 million for years, even as other evidence suggests that hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens settle here each year.

The Census is supposed to be a decennial snapshot of the nation. Understanding how immigration is affecting that snapshot is legitimate and non-threatening, except to those who would prefer that the American people be kept in the dark.
Southwest Border (i.e., the Districts of Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, Western Texas and Southern Texas) to adopt a policy to prosecute all Department of Homeland Security referrals of section 1325(a) violations, to the extent practicable.”

Sessions noted that “The situation at our southwest border is unacceptable. Congress has failed to pass effective legislation that serves the national interest—that closes dangerous loopholes and fully funds a wall along our southern border. As a result, a crisis has erupted at our Southwest Border that necessitates an escalated effort to prosecute those who choose to illegally cross.”

“To those who wish to challenge the Trump Administration’s commitment to public safety, national security, and the rule of law, I warn you: illegally entering this country will not be rewarded, but will instead be met with the full prosecutorial powers of the Department of Justice,” declared Sessions.
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