

- FrontPage Magazine - <http://www.frontpagemag.com> -

The Republican Senate and the Temptation of Immigration Reform

Posted By [Bruce Thornton](#) On November 7, 2014 @ 12:51 am In [Daily Mailer,FrontPage](#) | [35 Comments](#)

Anyone who believes in the Constitution and the primacy of individual rights and freedom should be relieved after the electoral beat-down administered to Harry Reid's do-nothing Senate. Over the last 6 years the federal Leviathan has grown fatter and fatter, every pound coming at the cost of our freedom and autonomy, not to mention the trillions of borrowed dollars burned in various Keynesian stimulus fires. At the same time, the imperial presidency of Obama, abetted by his courtiers in the Senate, has trampled the Constitution's limits on government power, and extended intrusive, inefficient, wasteful federal bureaucracies into the business of the states and the rights of the people.

Anything that slows down or challenges this expansion in the next two years will be welcome. The President should be made either to sign or to veto legislation on reforming taxes, securing the border, and correcting the flaws of Obamacare, to name a few issues voters are concerned about. And every piece of legislation should make clear that its ultimate goal is to restore to our politics the ideals of freedom, and the virtues of self-reliance, self-responsibility, and prudence.

Yet there is a danger that many Republicans in the Senate will heed the siren song of "getting things done" and "bi-partisan cooperation" already being sung by the usual progressive mouthpieces. Here's Tom Brokaw, mouthpiece emeritus of NBC news, on the implications of the Republican victory:

"They [the voters] are thinking that they would like to have Washington get something done. And the question is not just which party can get it done, but how can they change the tone in Washington so they can work together . . . The question then is what are they [Republicans] prepared to give to the Democrats to meet them at middle ground? What they are going to do about immigration? What are they are going to do about the minimum wage?"

Brokaw's examples of immigration and the minimum wage tip his hand. The subtext is that "cooperation" and "working together" on these issues really mean that Republicans give ground to pass legislation the other side wants for ideological and political advantage. No matter how much evidence piles up, for example, that raising the minimum wage does little to help those who need it most, like working families--half of minimum-wage earners are 16-24 years old, and a quarter are teenagers-- the progressive mantra of "income inequality" continually exploits this issue for political gain. In Brokaw's view, then, if Republicans ignore the fact that raising the minimum wage could cost half a million jobs, according to the CBO, and they go ahead and "compromise" with the Democrats and vote to raise it, then they will be doing the right thing. As usual, progressive harping on "gridlock" and "obstructionism" is usually code for the other side's sticking to its principles.

Yet "immigration reform" is a greater danger, for several Republican Senators last year joined with Democrats in writing the "Comprehensive Immigration Reform" bill, an overstuffed farrago of changes to immigration law, the most dangerous of which is a virtual amnesty for illegal aliens. Of course, improved "border enforcement" is part of the bill, but we've been down that road before. In 1986 Ronald Reagan signed the bi-partisan Immigration Reform and Control Act, which granted amnesty to nearly 3 million illegal aliens, along with stricter rules against hiring illegal aliens, a presumably thorough vetting process for those getting citizenship, and informal pledges that there would be stricter enforcement of the border. We all know how that worked out: the border remained porous, the employment sanctions were ineffective, and now we have nearly 12 million illegal aliens living and working in this country.

There are two reasons why some Republicans are willing to repeat this mistake. First, certain industries obviously depend on cheap labor to do work Americans don't want to do. They have a

point, since there is a lot of hard, dirty, physically taxing work American citizens are unlikely to do without labor costs pricing products or services out of the market. And many don't have to take those jobs, since food stamps, Social Security Disability, extended unemployment payments, and other social-welfare transfers make it easier not to work. There is a fierce theoretical debate about whether these unemployed Americans would work if wages were increased enough, and the supply of cheap labor reduced. But as long as welfare for those who don't work and cheap labor for employers remain available, we'll never know the answer to that question.

The more delusional argument is that growing numbers of Latino Democratic voters will eventually swamp the Republican Party if it does not reach out to this demographic and do something to show that Republicans aren't the xenophobic, nativist, or racist troglodytes of mainstream media caricatures. Usually accompanying this argument are encomia to those 12 million God-fearing, hardworking, family-values illegal aliens whose natural political homes would be the Republican Party if not for the extremist nativists on the fringe who keep blocking immigration reform. Little evidence, however, suggests that caving in on illegal aliens will win over millions of Latino voters, 75% percent of whom favor a "bigger government providing more services," according to a [Pew](#) poll, a view consistent with the policies of the Democratic Party. It's patronizing and reductive to think that Latino voters--a complex demographic with multiple, often-conflicting interests-- determine their vote simply on the issue of illegal aliens at the expense of all those other interests or concerns.

More important, the pro-amnesty Republicans have done little to convince us skeptics that they have a reliable and effective means of sorting out those illegal aliens who possess all those laudable qualities and values and so deserve to become citizens. The 1986 bill had a lot of tough talk that in the event was ineffective in separating the good from the bad. Over the past year talk has circulated that in any eventual reform even a few DUIs or convictions for welfare fraud won't prevent an illegal alien from getting citizenship. But right now we can't even track and keep out of the country thousands of illegal alien felons. The illegal alien who recently murdered 2 sheriff deputies in Sacramento had racked up 10 misdemeanor violations and been deported twice. Indeed, in 2013, 60% of deportations were of foreigners who had already been deported. What makes us think that the CRI will put in place reliable mechanisms to improve on this sorry record and keep thugs and felons from becoming citizens or continually crossing our semi-open border?

Of course, something must be done about the problem of 12 million illegal aliens residing in our country. The costs of the criminal activities of a substantial portion of this group, as well as of social services, are high both in dollars and in social disorder. As for the former, according to the [Heritage Foundation](#), the difference between taxes paid and "direct and means-tested benefits, education, and population-based services" received by illegal aliens is \$54.5 billion a year. Grant them amnesty and make them eligible for other benefits reserved for citizens, and the tab will increase to \$106 billion. These figures don't include the ancillary costs of crime and disorder of which legal citizens, unlike the affluent Senators and pro-amnesty plutocrats, must bear the brunt.

So far the victorious Republicans are studiously ignoring immigration reform. House Speaker John Boehner and soon-to-be Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell didn't mention it at all in their *Wall Street Journal* [op-ed](#) outlining the Republican Congress's "priorities" for next year. But Obama's recent threat to use Executive Orders to do something about immigration if the Republicans don't act might tempt some Republicans to resurrect the CIR bill in order to head off the president. Mitt Romney has predicted action on immigration in a Republican-controlled Senate, and Ari Fleischer wrote last week, "It is high time for the GOP to move forward on immigration reform." With the 2016 presidential election in mind, such Republicans, hoping to peel off Hispanic voters, may want to prove that the party isn't filled with xenophobes and racists. And others may want to demonstrate they can "govern" and "solve problems" through "bipartisan consensus," and so avoid the usual mainstream media charges of "obstructionism" and "gridlock" that they believe turn voters against them.

They should resist this temptation and pass only immigration legislation that strengthens border security by whatever means necessary. And they should remember that what many decry as "gridlock" is in fact James Madison's "balance of power," the protection of individual freedom from concentrations of federal power.

Freedom Center pamphlets now available on Kindle: [Click here.](#)

[Subscribe](#) to Frontpage's TV show, *The Glazov Gang*, and [LIKE](#) it on [Facebook](#).

Article printed from FrontPage Magazine: <http://www.frontpagemag.com>

URL to article: <http://www.frontpagemag.com/2014/bruce-thornton/the-republican-senate-and-the-temptation-of-immigration-reform/>

Copyright © 2009 FrontPage Magazine. All rights reserved.