

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IMMIGRATION

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 26, 1997

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, June 25, 1997 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS

Americans have long taken pride in our heritage as a nation of immigrants. From its beginnings as a nation, America has been a refuge for individuals fleeing persecution and an opportunity for new beginnings. Immigrants built our country. Southern Indiana, for example, was largely settled by a wave of German immigrants in the last century. We are now experiencing a new wave of immigration.

CURRENT SITUATION

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service predicts that in the 1990s the U.S. will receive the largest number of immigrants of any decade in our nation's history: 10 million people, almost twice the population of Indiana. This surpasses the previous record decade for immigration, 1901-1910, which had less than 9 million immigrants.

However, because our population has grown greatly since the early 1900s, the percentage of foreign-born people is actually far less than earlier in this century. Foreign-born people currently represents 9% of the American population, which is half the proportion they made up in 1910. Indiana ranks among states with fewest immigrants. Legal and illegal immigrants are only about 1% of the state's population, with a smaller percentage in Southern Indiana.

THE ISSUE

Views on immigration vary widely. Some believe we should be open to all who seek new opportunities and hope to escape persecution. Others believe that immigration policies must be tempered to prevent newcomers from taking away American jobs. Some support immigration as a source of low-wage labor. Others are concerned that immigration is bringing about a cultural change in America. They often speak of a total moratorium on immigration.

Most Hoosiers favor decreasing legal immigration, and are upset about the presence of illegal immigrants. Nationwide, polls show that 80% of Americans favor reduced immigration levels.

WHO IS COMING

In 1995, the U.S. took in about 720,000 legal immigrants. Most (64%) were admitted because they are immediate family members of U.S. citizens.

The second-largest group (16%) was composed of refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing persecution in their homelands and seeking freedom in our country. A relatively small number (12%) were admitted because they possess special professional skills and high education which would significantly contribute to our economy and society. The smallest category (7%) included people admitted to bring about greater geographic diversity in the immigrant pool. Most were from Western European countries.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Some Americans believe that immigrants cause a drain on the economy, since they benefit from social services such as welfare, education, and health care. However, there is strong evidence that immigrants overall help the economy. A recent study by the National Academy of Sciences found that the average immigrant contributes \$1800 more in taxes each year than he or she receives in benefits. The study said this is because immigrants tend to be highly motivated and experience faster wage growth than native-born Americans.

Immigrants sometimes take jobs away from native-born Americans, with the greatest impact on unskilled jobs in big cities. But it is also the case that immigrants have created many new jobs by spending their wages, establishing businesses, buying services, and paying taxes.

Immigration also helps shore up the Social Security system, adding to the labor force at a time when fewer workers will have to support more retirees. Europe and Japan, which take in fewer immigrants than we do, are straining under the burden of aging populations.

Overall, the best available figures suggest that the government spends more per capita for native-born Americans than for immigrants, roughly \$3800 versus \$2200 per year. In short, immigrants on average put more into the public coffers and take out less than native-Americans.

SOCIAL IMPACT

Those who wish to reduce immigration often claim that large-scale immigration is associated with crime and social breakdown, especially in big cities with high concentrations of newcomers such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Yet others point out that immigration seems to bring some social benefits, too. Experts believe that one reason for New York City's economic renaissance and falling crime rate is the influx of hard-working, enterprising immigrants who have helped rebuild formerly run-down neighborhoods.

A more serious problem is the cultural challenge posed by the changing character of immigration. Modern transportation and communications technology has made it easier for today's newcomers—primarily from Latin America and Asia—to keep their old language and culture. In addition, immigration from Mexico is concentrated in the Southwest, which inhibits the full integration of this group into the broader society and culture.

CONCLUSION

It is popular to blame immigrants, both legal and illegal, for many American problems. There is always the temptation for politicians to demonize aliens. My conclusion is that while immigration produces both costs and benefits, on balance it strengthens our nation.

I believe that Congress must pay more attention to immigration. Our responsibility is to set reasonable limits on numbers and rearrange preferences to maximize the positive aspects of immigration. For example, I doubt that it is in our interest to continue to emphasize family preferences to the detriment of highly skilled applicants.

If we fail to reduce the rate of legal immigration, and do not crack down on illegal immigration, the quality of life in this country

will decline. But we cannot completely bar the door to newcomers. Immigrants bring vitality, freshness, and diversity that enriches the country. I believe that a well-regulated system of legal immigration is in our national interest.

The motto that appears on our currency—"E Pluribus Unum", out of many, one—reminds us that maintaining the unity of our nation of immigrants is one of America's greatest historic achievements. It will also be one of our greatest challenges in the years ahead.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL CARL KERN

HON. JAMES A. BARCIA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 26, 1997

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, in addition to providing for their families, volunteers spend long tireless hours helping others while in return they receive no financial compensation. Volunteers selflessly sacrifice their free time to improve the quality of life for others. One of my constituents, Michael Carl Kern, has proven his dedication to his Nation, his State and his community time and time again by devoting his efforts and energy to the citizens of this country. A Vietnam era veteran, he is a long time veterans advocate, an outstanding patriot and an effective community activist.

Mike was born on May 13, 1942, and spent most of his life in my home town of Bay City, MI. He recently moved to Las Vegas, NV, but, his positive influence and efforts are sorely missed by Bay County's residents. Perhaps he is best known and recognized for his 23 years with American Legion Youth Programs.

Taking over in 1989, after the passing of Leon "Leo" Malechi, Mike served as the general manager for 7 years. Mike had big shoes to fill as Leo was awarded the "State Baseball Man of the Year" Mike said. He learned and implemented Leo's teachings effectively and efficiently. Mike was voted the 1997 American Legion Baseball man of the Year for his contribution to the State Legion baseball program.

American Legion baseball was established 77 years ago and is the oldest organized program of its kind. Mike committed countless hours to raising money to ensure its success in Bay County. He faithfully worked to improve Legion baseball in the State of Michigan by serving on the State American Legion Baseball Committee as 10th District Chairman and 4th Zone Chairman.

Not only did Mike work to provide children with baseball opportunities, he also provided many services for his fellow veterans. Serving as post commander at the American Legion Harding-Oak-Craidge Post 18, in Bay City, MI, he was the first person to be elected for three terms. Mike has been a member of the post for 25 years and has held several other influential positions. He is also a valuable member of the Vietnam Veteran Chapter 484, the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge 164, and the Matt

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