



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

[HTTP://CRAIG.SENATE.GOV/PRESS/](http://craig.senate.gov/press/)

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
April 14, 2006

Dan Whiting (202) 224-8078
Sid Smith (202) 224-8708

No Labor Flow Makes Economy Slow
by Senator Larry Craig

Anybody who has watched the news or read a newspaper lately has likely heard about immigration. Whether it's the immigration rallies taking place all across the country, or the debate in the United States Senate over comprehensive immigration reform, immigration has been a hot topic lately, and for good reason.

There are many differing proposals circulating in Congress right now that aim to solve our immigration problems, but there is almost unanimous agreement on one thing: the current system is broken and cannot be ignored. Although the Senate failed to reach an agreement on comprehensive immigration reform, no one should be fooled into thinking the debate is over. Congress finally appears to understand that today's broken policies serve neither our security nor our economy.

Many of us understood that point several years ago, and started doing something about it. In the last decade, Congress has tripled the number of agents enforcing border and immigration laws. Apprehensions at the border have pushed well past 900,000 per year, and removals have increased sixfold as our grip has tightened. Yet, despite the increase in apprehensions and removals over the last decade, the undocumented population in this country has more than doubled, reaching as high as 12 million, by some estimates.

Why do immigrants continue to come? Jobs, of course. America's economy continues to be the most dynamic in the world, growing rapidly. Germany and France pale in comparison, because they continue to struggle with double-digit unemployment as they try to provide lavish welfare and retirement benefits on the backs of shrinking labor pools. Japan also struggled through a labor force contraction that has slowed down its economy for well over a decade.

The native-born population of the United States is shrinking too, but America is different. It isn't possible to become Japanese, to become German. You can move there, absorb the language and the culture, but you'll never be a Frenchman.

But anyone can become an American.

This beautiful truth has been proven time and time again, even in Idaho. Hispanics were working in Idaho's mines way back in the 1860s. Early in the 20th century, there was a strong Scandinavian population settling near the mountains and lakes of North Idaho, which served as the

[MORE]

CRAIG Page 2 – No Labor Flow Makes Economy Slow

inspiration for the Coeur d'Alene High School mascot (the Vikings), so I'm told. Basque immigrants settled all across southern Idaho, and their cultural contributions have been celebrated by generations of Idahoans. It's likely there was tension when these groups started to arrive, but we embrace this heritage now, as we ought.

Without immigrants, the U.S. culture and economy would be in the same boat as Japan and much of Europe. But they need to come here legally. A nation that fails to manage its borders cannot be secure at home. That being said, shutting down the borders alone—without reforming our immigration laws and guest worker programs—will strangle the U.S. economy, including Idaho agriculture.

At 3.4 percent unemployment, Idaho and many other states are on the verge of a labor shortage. The plain truth is that we are not reproducing quickly enough to replace retiring workers and fill the new jobs created by a growing economy. If farmers and business owners can't get enough workers, many will fold, and the needs of American consumers—even groceries—will be met by foreign companies instead of our own.

That is why I have supported a comprehensive solution to America's immigration problems. When the legal immigration system becomes more efficient to use and more effective, more people will use it and come here legally instead of illegally.

It must also be a realistic system. Illegal immigrants will remain underground, refusing to assimilate, if they must leave before obtaining legal status. Instead, my AgJOBS proposal, which was a part of the comprehensive package being debated on the Senate floor, would allow them to stay, but only after they pay a fine and agree to three years or more of backbreaking work in the fields of America's farms and nurseries. Amnesty is when you get off scot-free. AgJOBS is what I call paying your dues.

The immigration debate is not going away until we have a compromise in place, approved by the House and Senate, and signed by the President. I will not rest until we have secure borders and a system that provides the workers we need.