

10/14/06

**Don't Fence Me In**

by  
Tom Holbrook

Finally, our United States Senators and Congressional Representatives put their heads together and agreed to do something that will insure a beginning of the end of our porous borders with Mexico. Two weeks after the U.S. House passed a border fence bill not so overwhelmingly with a 283 – 138 vote, the U.S. Senate passed a similar bill with a surprising vote of 80 – 19. What differences there were in the two bills have been worked out and the legislation has been forwarded to President Bush's desk for his signature... to make it law.

Needless to say, for many this was unwanted legislation because it is designed to stem the tide of illegal immigrants streaming into our country at a rate of several million per year and there are those out there who profit politically and financially off this flood of illegals every year. A writer for the Los Angeles Times predictably stated, "It is legislation that President Bush should veto but probably won't despite the fact Mexican authorities and humanitarian groups have protested and urged him to do so. Can we really afford another blow to our image of freedom and openness at a time when half the world views us as imperialistic and hypocritical? Doesn't that portray us as fearful?"

My take on his take is this... if soon to be gone President Vicente Fox of the Mexican government and humanitarian groups are against the bill it is probably legislation that should have been passed years earlier. Also, freedom for Americans does not mean we allow a foreign country to send all its unemployed into our country just to boost its own economy. The Mexican government has been found to be actively aiding the illegals crossing into our country and its for purely economic reasons, not humanitarian. Because their government does not have the wherewithal to put together a vibrant economy, despite the country's huge oil reserves, upwards of 40% of Mexico's citizens live in poverty. The illegals that make it across our borders and gain jobs send a percentage of their payroll back to family in Mexico and this money, projected to be as much as \$20 Billion this year, represents close to a third of Mexico's a greater amount of foreign exchange than from their oil sales.

There have been reports that Mexico's oil industry is so heavily in debt due to poor management that it could go bankrupt in a few years which means if the income from their citizens who work in America is curtailed Mexico could revert to 3<sup>rd</sup> World economic conditions very quickly. They shouldn't but a history of governmental instability, economic failures and citizen unrest should be a warning beacon for our government to be wary of any future kowtowing to Mexico's demands and wishes.

The legislation wisely approved by our Congress is not a sure-fire cure for our border woes but it is a good beginning. It authorizes the building of a 700 mile, two layer, state of the art concrete and steel fence/wall including a patrol road, sound and motion sensors, cameras and additional security measures not delineated at this time. It will run primarily along most of the Arizona border where approximately half of the 1.2 million illegals arrested last year were crossing. It is acknowledged that some parts of the border will not have a fence because of the obstacles presented by the mountain range. Those who know say much of the mountainous terrain in AZ is a formidable natural deterrent and not passable even by those on foot. Even though the fence will only cover approximately 1/3 of the 2,000+ mile US/Mexican border it will give our lawmakers an insight as to the practicality of such a barrier in keeping a large percentage of illegals from crossing into our country.

Those who feel the fence would be a blow against humanity by denying the poor and indigent citizens of Mexico an opportunity to better their lives, should be aware of the almost 2,000 illegals who have died from 1998 to 2004 trying to get into our country. They have drowned in the Rio Grande River that separates our countries, died of dehydration and exposure walking through some of the vast desert areas along the border and, in some instances, rape and murder by the “coyotes” who transport them across the border for exorbitant fees. Wouldn’t it be more humane to have them cross over legally under a new guest worker program we can install later?

Hopefully, now that authorization has been given and \$1.2 Billion earmarked for the beginning construction, we will see further progress in making the border fence/wall a reality. Then we can get serious about a valid guest worker program that will meet the labor needs of our agricultural industries, after our own citizens have been given first crack at these jobs that “Americans refuse to do.”

#

An estimated 40 per cent of Mexicans live in poverty and 1,954 of them died trying to get into the U.S. from Mexico between 1998 and 2004. Many of them died of dehydration or exposure during long walks without water or drowning in the Rio Grande River, which separates the two countries for much of the border.

Washington Post

The fence would also stretch through parts of California, New Mexico and Texas.