Republican Perspective
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MOST FOLKS WANT A RAISE

"Canada has an immigration policy you might want to emulate. They want more skilled and educated immigrants." Rush Limbaugh, Talk Show Host

Republican Senators Tom Cotton (AR) and David Perdue (GA) recently introduced the "Reforming America Immigration for Strong Employment Act" (RAISE). The shrill from the Progressive Left was quick and cutting. But like other policy reforms, the Left is out of step with mainstream America.

The Center for Immigration Reform conducted a poll of then 1,000 likely voters in November 2016. The poll asked respondents if they support enforcing current laws causing illegal immigrants to leave the country. A majority of the public supported this approach; and a majority or plurality supported it among almost all demographic groups, including Hispanics. The findings:

- 56% of likely voters support causing illegal immigrants to return to their home countries by penalizing employers, getting cooperation from local law enforcement, and denying welfare benefits. Only 30 % were opposed to this approach.

- Of likely Hispanic voters, 51% responded that efforts to enforce the law have been "too little", compared to 38% who indicated that it was "too much" or "just right".

- On legal immigrants, 52 % of Hispanic voters indicated that they wanted to allow 500,000 or fewer legal immigrants in to the country each year, about half the current level.

- 54% of respondents picked 500,000 a year or fewer as the level they would prefer — about half the number currently allowed into the country. Just 11% wanted the current level of immigration of one million a year; and another 11%wanted more than one million a year.

Before discussing the RAISE Act, it's important to understand the impact of The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (INA). Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) championed this law with falsehoods similar to Obamacare. He declared: "The bill will not flood our cities with immigrants. It will not upset the ethnic mix of our society. It will not relax the standards of admission. It will not cause American workers to lose their jobs." He stated at a Senate hearing how "the bill will not permit the entry of subversive persons, criminals, illiterates, or those with contagious disease or serious mental illness" or "to a person who is likely to become a public charge."

Here are the facts since passage of the INA:

- Over 61 million immigrants entered the U.S.; by comparison, 18.2 million immigrants came during the Great Wave of 1890-1919.
- Poverty has increased. According to Pew Research, in 1970, 18% of immigrants were living below the poverty line. At present, 28% of immigrants are living in poverty. The poverty rate among native citizens, on the other hand, has held steady between 13 and 15%. More than 50% of all immigrant households receive welfare benefits, compared to only 30% of native U.S. households that receive welfare benefits.
- Kennedy promised that INA would not change the ethnic mix of the country. In 1910, 89% of immigrants were from Europe. Today, only 10% are European. 50% of all immigrants since 1965 have come from Latin America.

The main problem with the INA was that it forced officials to consider family ties over skills. The initial burst of immigration under INA was predominantly low-skilled and from non-European countries. This set off what is known as "chain migration" whereby the majority of future immigrants were from similar socio-economic backgrounds. Just 15% of green cards over the last decade were allocated based on any skill.

The RAISE Act will return annual immigration to about 500,000 from the current 1,000,000+. It introduces a "merit-based" system that is used in Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and the United Kingdom. It would revamp the current visa system and replace it with 130,000 visas to be allocated based on a points system that prioritizes education, English-language proficiency, high-paying job offers, merit, and entrepreneurial initiative. Those with the most points will get first preference.

Additionally, the legislation will: 1) ensure that immediate families – the primary immigrant, spouse, and minor children – remain intact during the immigration process; 2) eliminate the needless and fraud-ridden visa lottery; 3) place a responsible limit on refugee admissions at 50,000 per year.

The RAISE Act closely follows the bipartisan recommendations of President Clinton's Jordan Commission. It called for moving the nation to an immigration model that emphasized skills over bloodlines and returned immigration to more traditional levels. Several current Democrat lawmakers have supported a merit-based immigration system. However, their support was before the Progressive's call to "RESIST" any Republican measure. Remember, "resisting" is not "obstructing…"