
Interview with Antony Davies | The Pelican Post

Continued from "[Immigration Status Checks: an Employer Obligation?](#)"

Fergus: I'm preparing an article on Louisiana's potential passage of mandatory E-verify participation for all employers that contract with the state ([here](#)). You have a lecture on immigration on [LearnLiberty.org](#), and I wonder whether you'd be willing to comment on the following questions:

What impact on the flow illegal immigration do you think this would have?

Antony: It's not clear to me how something like E-verify would have any effect on illegal immigration. Illegal immigrants already work under the table. Requiring that employers verify the legal status of their employees is like requiring that drug dealers verify the number of sales they make each month. To paraphrase from one of my favorite movies, one does not get a permit to do an illegal thing.

Fergus: Do the purported costs of illegal immigrants outweigh the economic benefits they provide, and what would be the impact of them actually packing up and leaving?

Antony: Imagine if barrels of oil suddenly sprouted legs and started walking into the United States. We'd have more oil, which means we'd have more gasoline, the price to fill up our cars would fall and the price of food (the largest component of which is transportation) would fall. Clearly, this would be a good thing. But workers are a resource just like oil is a resource. Workers bring skills and labor. The more skills and labor we have, the more stuff we can produce. As we produce more stuff, the price of that stuff falls, and everyone who buys that stuff is better off.

It gets even better. Think about what is required to be an illegal immigrant. To be an illegal immigrant, you must be driven to seek out a better life for yourself and your family. You must be willing to take big risks – to leave a life that you know to come to a foreign country where you may not speak the language and may have no friends or family. These attributes – the desire to better oneself and the willingness to take risks – are attributes of entrepreneurs. We talk about government "creating" jobs. Government doesn't create jobs; it merely shifts jobs around. It's entrepreneurs who really create jobs. They find new and better ways to produce things, and create new goods that didn't exist before. Those are precisely the type of people we want to come to this country.

There's a moral argument to be made as well. All Americans benefit from living in the richest country in the world. We became rich because our ancestors valued hard work and risk-taking, and they came to this country because the United States welcomed people who were entrepreneurial. Who do we think we are to deny the same opportunities that made us rich to today's immigrants simply because we got here first?

Immigrants are entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurial spirit is a function of the person, not the country. So the real question before us isn't whether or not we should admit these immigrants. It is whether we want their entrepreneurial talents adding to our country's well-being or to someone else's.

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