

Illegal Immigration In Arizona

by Elisa Williams

Illegal immigration has long been a controversial issue in the United States. Recently, most of that controversy has become focused on the state of Arizona due to various laws that have been passed cracking down on illegal immigrants and those who hire them. As with any controversial issue, there are varying viewpoints. Those against illegal immigration say that people who are here illegally take jobs from Americans, unfairly take advantage of government assistance programs they don't pay for, and contribute to rising crime rates, among many other complaints. On the other side of the fence, there are groups that believe that everyone who wants to work should be able to have a job, whether they are a citizen or not. Also, they point out that many illegal immigrants have taxes deducted from their paychecks but are not able to claim their refunds, resulting in income for the U.S. and Arizona state governments. One of the biggest arguments that pro-immigration groups have is that this country was built by immigrants, and so-called illegal immigrants take jobs that most Americans don't want to do anyway. The opinions regarding this issue span a huge spectrum; at one end of this spectrum there are extremist vigilante groups that feel they need to take the law into their own hands, often shooting illegal immigrants on sight. On the other end of the spectrum are extremist groups that advocate open borders and recognition of Spanish as an official language of the United States. One thing that both extremes seem to agree on is the need for immigration reform. On the anti-immigration end, some groups want to militarize the border and completely blockade all border crossings. At the other end are those that want to eliminate the border altogether, and give the southwest region back to its "rightful owners".

Arizona Minuteman Project

The Arizona Minuteman Project was formed in April 2005 by co-founders Jim Gilchrist and Chris Simcox. Initially, the group was thought to be an experiment (hence the name "Project") but the organization has since put down roots and splintered into another faction that goes by the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps. The main goal of this group is to secure all borders against unlawful entry with a "by any means necessary" approach, and have our government establish stronger laws about who can become legal citizens. There are Minutemen chapters in every state, and in every U.S. territory. The name "Minutemen" comes from militia members who fought in the American Revolution. They recruit volunteers to patrol the borders, and when these volunteers come across illegal immigrants there have sometimes been violent skirmishes. Usually the volunteers place the immigrants under citizen's arrest and hold them until authorities arrive. This group feels that immigration is a blight on our society, that these illegal immigrants are taking advantage of the system at the expense of lawful citizens. They do, however, make it a

point to say in their mission statement that illegal immigrants are not the enemies of our society but that drug dealers, criminals, and potential terrorists are. In addition to the patrolling of borders, the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps uses lobbying, advertising, and letter campaigns to press their stance on public officials.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Minuteman_Project_Inc.

<http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/5-2-2005-69396.asp>

<http://www.kvoa.com/Global/story.asp?S=5138629>

<http://www.minutemanhq.com/hq/aboutus.php>

FAIR: Federation for American Immigration Reform

The Federation for American Immigration Reform was founded in 1979, long before the recent surge in illegal immigrants entering the U.S. The federation is a non-partisan group that boasts over 250,000 members. FAIR proposes a temporary moratorium on all immigration except spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens that would allow government to put a more effective immigration policy into place. According to FAIR, all U.S. citizens would benefit from this because the million or so illegal immigrants that enter our country each year affect all aspects of our lives. FAIR activities include research, public education, media outreach, grassroots organizing, government relations, litigation and advocacy at the national, state and local levels. The group has also been called upon to testify before Congress in regards to immigration reform. FAIR advocates "7 Principles of True Comprehensive Immigration Reform:"

1. Cut the Numbers
2. No Amnesty or Mass Guest-Worker Program
3. Protect Wages and Standards of Living
4. Major Upgrade in Interior Enforcement, Led by Strong Employers Penalties
5. Stop Special Interest Asylum Abuse
6. Immigration Time Out
7. Equal Under the Law

Of the groups I have researched, FAIR seemed to be the most widely supported, and had some of the most "middle-of-the-road" views.

http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=iic_immigrationissuecenters6ce3

http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=research_research9605

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_for_American_Immigration_Reform

Coalicion de Derechos Humanos (Coalition for Human Rights)

The Coalicion de Derechos Humanos is a group whose main purpose is to raise awareness regarding the human rights crisis currently going on at the U.S. - Mexico border. They go on to define the crisis as, "the environmental degradation and violations of Indigenous sovereignty and rights of mobility and passage." The group's goals include educating illegal immigrants as to their rights, increasing public awareness of human rights violations that directly result from U.S. policy, and pressuring the government to change current policy to a more humane approach. The group seems to focus most of its public statements on the mounting death toll of illegal border-crossers, but when one delves a little deeper into the mission statement it's evident the group is rather pro-immigration. One of their current efforts is the "Bring Down the Walls" campaign. The group also claims that illegal immigration enhances the lives of US citizens in the southwest by bringing in a labor force that would otherwise not be here. One faction of the group, referred to as the "reconquistas", advocates the returning of the southwest to "Atzlan" - the mother country. Isabel Garcia is one of the group's leaders, a fact that raises the ire of many anti-illegal immigration groups being that she heads the Pima County Legal Defender's Office.

<http://www.phxnews.com/fullstory.php?article=38303>

<http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net/>

http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=94&Itemid=46