

## **Should the U.S. get tough on illegal workers? No** **By DEBORAH WALLER MEYERS**

The derailment of Bernard Kerik's nomination [as Secretary of Homeland Security] because of an unauthorized nanny is merely the latest high-profile example of the need for comprehensive immigration policy reform.

Employers' hiring of unauthorized workers with near impunity extends far beyond the nannies of New York City to include poultry processing workers and farmworkers and construction workers and hotel workers and landscapers nationwide.

With as many as 10 million persons in the U.S. illegally - most of whom are working - imagine how many employers are out of the running for cabinet posts!

Of course the U.S. should enforce its immigration laws. But the country needs laws that are actually enforceable. America needs to recognize: 1) the demand for workers that our strong and ever-evolving economy generates; 2) the prevalence of low-skill, low-wage, often physically demanding jobs that few parents dream about for their children; and 3) the fallacy that border-enforcement alone can prevent hundreds of thousands of people - willing to risk their lives and savings to better themselves and their families - from seeking entry.

President Bush acknowledged the increasing disconnect between immigration law and reality one year ago. Now it is time to put forth a serious legislative proposal that would bring immigration policy into the 21st century. Such a proposal would:

- Address the existing undocumented population (policymakers should explore more realistic options than mass deportations, voluntary departures, or amnesty);
- Create mechanisms to substitute legal entry for illegal flows (focusing enforcement on potential terrorists rather than potential workers);
- Provide more realistic immigration categories and per-country caps to ensure timely entry for those who play by the rules (it would have taken years to legally sponsor Kerik's nanny, given today's backlogs).
- Assist other countries in creating the conditions, and jobs, that will encourage their nationals to build their future at home, not abroad.

Our current wink-and-nod system is not one that the United States, with its commitment to democracy, liberty, security and the rule of law, can or should tolerate.

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## **Should the U.S. get tough on illegal workers? Yes** **By MARK KRIKORIAN**

Sometimes it seems that the only people who are expected to comply with the immigration law are nominees for cabinet posts. Unfair as that may seem, Bernard Kerik's illegal-alien nanny at least forces us to confront the absurdity at the center of our immigration policy. On the one hand, we have laws that appear tough, banning the employment of illegal aliens, for instance. This is done to satisfy public concerns over uncontrolled borders and mass immigration.

The absurdity lies in the fact that these laws are almost never enforced. In 2002, only 13 employers were fined for hiring illegals. Had he not invited scrutiny by seeking high office, Kerik could have gone to his grave without anyone knowing he had hired an illegal alien.

There are two ways of fixing this. The politically correct approach is to give amnesty to illegal aliens, increase immigration further and loosen the borders even more. This has the virtue of being more honest.

Unfortunately, it also would be a disaster, saddling the middle class with new taxes, undermining assimilation and making it easier for terrorists to enter our country. It wouldn't even reduce illegal immigration, since foreigners who didn't qualify under new rules would understand that they could get amnesty if they stuck around.

The other approach is to start enforcing the law, not just against the occasional presidential nominee, but across the board. This is an attainable goal - immigration is not an uncontrollable force of nature, driven mainly by the economy, but rather is sparked and nurtured by government policies.

Nor would a new approach to enforcement require land mines and machine guns.

A humane but uncompromising effort would welcome legal newcomers but do everything possible to prevent illegals from entering the country and prevent those who got through from living a normal life here. Such a policy would cause the illegal population to start declining through attrition, eventually reducing the problem to a manageable nuisance rather than today's crisis.

And at that point, maybe we could stop asking White House staff about their nannies and focus on more pressing issues, like their mistresses.

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