Illegal Immigration through the Southern Border of the United States

Political Considerations
Introduction:

The United States of America is a country founded on immigrants. Yet, since the signing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, groups of immigrants who had previously been considered legal immigrants would have been considered illegal. Since then, millions of illegal immigrants have entered the United States (Tichenor, 2016). In fact, according to a Pew Research Center study, there are approximately 10.7 million illegal immigrants in the United States with nearly eight million of those illegals coming from Central America, South America, and Mexico (Passel, 2018). Thus, the debate over illegal immigration through the southern border of the United States had become a very prominent, yet dividing issue among the public along with politicians, especially as of late. For example, according to a recent Gallup study, about 58% of Americans either worry a great or fair amount about the illegal immigration problem facing the United States, while 41% are only a little or not at all worried (Gallup, 2018). According to a similar poll conducted by Gallup, 21% of Americans perceive illegal immigration to be the biggest problem facing the United States. Also, that poll concluded that 37% of Republicans view it as the top problem facing the country while only 10% of Democrats agree. Overall illegal immigration is currently perceived to be the biggest problem facing the United States (McCarthey, 2018). Even though there have been prior actions taken to slow the flow of illegal immigrants into the United States and the Trump administration has made it one of their top priorities, illegal immigrants continue to enter the country. Therefore, bipartisan actions must be taken to lessen the number of illegal immigrants that enter the United States.
Views of the Republican Party:

Republicans and the Republican party believe that while legal immigration benefits all people, illegal immigration is more harmful than it is helpful and therefore the southern border must be secured to keep them from entering the country. According to their 2016 party platforms, the Republicans believe the American immigration system must serve the national interests of the United States and of the working American citizen. They believe illegal immigration hurts the average American worker, exploits the taxpayer, and harms those who are trying to enter the country legally. Finally, Republicans believe that no illegal alien should be granted amnesty for their actions. Therefore, the Republican party supports all actions taken to lessen the number of illegals in the country and adamantly opposes any actions to harbor illegal aliens (Republican National Committee, 2016). These platforms were transformed into major ideas of President Trump’s campaign, as he campaigned on the idea of increased border security through the building of a physical barrier and more of a presence of the border patrol to apprehend would be illegal immigrants. While in office, he has revisited this option through his standoff with Congressional Democrats over funding of his barrier which led to a 32 day partial government shutdown at the beginning of 2019. In an address to the American people, the president claimed an improved barrier would aid in stopping terrorists, human traffickers, and drug smugglers from entering the United States and causing a larger humanitarian crisis (Ballhaus, 2019). Currently, the proposal to build a barrier on the southern border is extremely popular among Republicans. According to a Pew Research Center study, 82% of Republicans support building a barrier on the southern barrier and 87% of Republicans believe building a
barrier would reduce illegal immigration into the United States (Bialik, 2019). Clearly, Republicans would support legislation to secure the border.

Views of the Democratic Party:

Democrats and the Democratic party essentially hold the opposite view of the Republicans on immigration. While both parties agree that legal immigration is beneficial to the United States as a whole, the Democrats are more receptive to illegal immigrants attempting to enter the country. According to their 2016 party platforms, the Democrats believe the current immigration system is broken and major changes must be made to fix it. Firstly, they believe in repealing 3-year, 10-year, and permanent bars on families entering the country. Also, Democrats believe in granting most if not all asylum-seekers Temporary Protected Status. Democrats believe that an easier path to citizenship should be put in place for all members of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) programs, along with those living in the United States without proper documentation. Finally, Democrats vowed to end raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents on undocumented families (Party Platform, 2016). In other words, the Democratic party wants to make entry into the United States more accessible for the people who they believe need it most. One way these platforms have manifested themselves across the nation is in the form of what are referred to as sanctuary jurisdictions. According to Kyle Barron, a researcher at the Center for Migration Study, a sanctuary jurisdiction is a city, county, or state which has legislation in place to provide sanctuary and aid for undocumented migrants without the risk of detention or deportation (Barron, 2017). In the United States, there are currently, seven sanctuary states and
over two hundred sanctuary cities and counties (Lord, 2017). Other forms of legislation created by Democrats were the aforementioned Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) programs, which were executive orders which granted children who were brought to the United States while they were young, along with their parents, even if undocumented, the right to stay legally. Although President Trump has threatened to end both programs, DACA and DAPA cover nearly 5.4 million people who live, work, and attend school in the United States (Dervarics, 2014). Thus, it could be inferred that Democrats would strongly support legislation to make it easier for immigrants to enter through the southern border of the United States.

**Recommendation:**

Clearly, since there is a near deadlock with Republicans holding the presidency and the Senate, while the Democrats hold the House of Representatives, it is very unlikely that one side is able to pass legislation solely supporting their argument. Therefore, given the political factors, it is recommended that Congress create a plan which would both strengthen security at the southern border while creating a clearer path to citizenship for illegal aliens currently living in the United States. In order to achieve this, Congress must pass appropriations bills which include greater funding for Border Patrol, which would allow them to hire more agents and use more sophisticated technology to defend the border from those trying to enter the country illegally. On the other hand, those undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States should be given an easier path to citizenship. While extensive vetting is necessary, this would open the door to undocumented immigrants.
Work Cited


