

*A renewed direction... The local solution to the "immigrant" dilemma...*

"Thank you for your reply, Chairman.... I appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule to both read and respond.

I certainly understand and respect your desire to serve the people and I know and feel their frustration, especially in these difficult economic times. However I also believe that we, as Americans, and especially our leaders, have to provide an example of not blaming others for our problems and seeking solutions that do no harm to anyone. One way in which this can be done, especially on the local level, is to have community dialogues with the goal of coming up with compromises which satisfy most everyone--with the only ones "self-marginalized" being those who are not willing to dialogue and compromise. When I have these dialogues with people of all backgrounds many become willing to soften their strongly held positions, which are often based on emotion and misinformation, and are willing to explore mutually beneficial solutions.

For instance, let us find out what the real or perceived problems people have with the so-called "illegals" and solve those problems, such as:

- *"They are taking our jobs"* : (not really true in most cases), but let's have a program to help unemployed people find work (I have always offered this assistance to anyone complaining, as in my business consulting I almost always have businesses contacting me to refer employees--including right now. So I periodically do a "guerilla" job search and referral training as a service to the community and will offer the same to any county as part of a solutions program.)
- *"They are overburdening our healthcare"*: OK, (not really true according to statistics) but let's find or start some free or sliding scale clinics. Four have opened in Cobb recently, one of which I am on the board of. We can do the same in any county.
- *"They are overburdening our school systems"*: OK (again, I don't agree) but let's help by providing volunteers to the schools--many immigrant parents volunteer in the South Cobb schools (how about a grandparent volunteer program which we have successfully started before).
- *"They are overburdening our social services"*: OK, even though they pay more in than they receive back, according to every govt audit, then let's not deport the parents because then the children definitely become a burden on society, and start or support non-profits to supplement. Also, if you are needy, we will help connect you with and obtain food stamp, housing, etc.--to fulfill your needs.
- *"They are a financial burden period"*: OK, (even though this is a complete fabrication, according to the IRS, the Texas State Audit and the OBM and GAO, etc.), let's bring them out of the shadow economy, help them get tax id#s, bank their money here, and pay even more into the system.
- *"They are a blight to our neighborhoods"* : Most are not and keep a decent home and property but those who don't can be visited by a friendly team of neighbors to explain how we do things (yards, cars, etc.)--just as in any neighborhood or homeowners association. We did this in my area and were well received and problems were resolved.

All of the above complaints really mean: *"I am hurting and I think or feel that it is because of the illegal immigrants."* An ordinance to control or drive away the immigrants is not likely to really address any of these concerns and is really only a window-dressing or a band-aid through which the dirt and blood will

soon seep through and you are back at square one where you have to throw the dirt at others or go for their blood.

I would be happy to work with you to help solve the real problems on a local basis--this could be a model for other counties. We are doing this in S.Cobb, to some extent, where I live, and are having some successes. We started with having area meetings--with Commissioners, Police and Black, White and Latino community members and stakeholders present--where we dialogued and got to know each other, and then made community improvement plans (not like a Commissioners meeting where individuals bring their gripes and expect you to do something but more like a town hall meeting where the goal is unity and progress and taking ownership-- and not at the expense of other community members).

In closing, I realize that as an elected official you may have to sometimes give your constituents what they want before you give them what they need--however in doing so it should not be at the expense of others. The program above gives them both what they want and need, and takes the focus off of blaming others.

Sincere regards,

Rich Pellegrino

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