



CLIFF OWEN, The Associated Press

Members of immigration rights organizations demonstrate in front of the White House in November, calling on President Barack Obama to fulfill his promise and pass immigration reform.

ILLEGAL

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undocumented contribute to government revenues in many ways through sales tax, gas tax and “sin” taxes and through rents used to pay real estate taxes. And they commonly have Social Security and Medicaid withheld, often under mismatched Social Security numbers. They put in to that system, but don’t take out — to the tune of \$7 billion per year.

Allowing the undocumented into the system would yield substantial increases to federal, state and local coffers in income taxes and FICA contributions.

• Immigrants help revitalize cities. Immigrants, whether legal or undocumented, bring new life to old cities. Neighborhoods that have seen better days are seeing new life, as waves of 21st-century immigrants replace prior generations. These new immigrants are often thrifty and hardworking and move quickly from renting to homeownership. Soon, these neighborhoods see the opening of small shops, groceries and restaurants, catering to the tastes of the community. While the sights, sounds and spices of these changing neighborhoods might roil some of the

earlier settlers, without these new groups, many city neighborhoods would be left lifeless and impoverished.

• Immigration restriction has high social costs for “blended” families. There are an estimated 12 million undocumented in this country. Many of them have U.S. citizen spouses and children. Deporting them or creating conditions that make their existence untenable hurts those citizen family members and drives them toward dependency. With a wage earner in the household, these families have a better chance at economic stability and upward mobility.

• Economics favor legalizing the undocumented. No one thinks it is possible to deport the undocumented. Estimated costs of removal of the undocumented exceed \$200 billion. No one in Washington thinks that is a good idea. As for self-deportation, i.e. increasing pressure through restriction, this is self-defeating. Just ask the people of Hazleton or other cities that decided to drive out the illegals with tough laws.

In short, the vast majority of the undocumented are here to stay. While no one would argue that the undocumented do not impose costs in such areas as law enforcement, medical care and education, on bal-

ance, the economic impact would be substantial and favorable, by some estimates adding \$1.5 trillion to GDP over the next decade.

These are just some of the reasons to get behind comprehensive immigration reform, including a “path to citizenship.”

Yes, we want to secure the border against threats, and we want to promote respect for the law. But we also want to create an immigration system that helps America be stronger, more vital and more competitive.

At the top end, we want to attract and retain the “best and brightest” and not erect barriers that discourage them from staying in America. We need immigration laws that recognize the demands of our economy in such areas as hospitality, health care and agriculture. We also need immigration laws that unite families and which do not force eligible immigrants to wait a decade or longer to come legally to America.

For some Americans, immigration feels like a threat — to culture, to jobs, to ways of life. This is not an unusual sentiment or a new one. Ultimately, it will be up to our lawmakers — in both parties — to look beyond the politics of fear and to summon the courage to enact reform that is in America’s national interest.



JEFF JANKOWSKI, The Associated Press

Demand is the key to job creation, according to one small-business owner.

JOBS

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doesn’t work this way, in a vacuum.

Business owners such as me create more jobs when we need more employees to meet the demand for goods and services our businesses provide. And we deduct employee costs from our taxable income. So demand is the key to job creation — not tax cuts.

But “job creator” is an effective smoke screen for the effort to justify more tax cuts for the wealthy. If the Bush tax cuts were extended past their Dec. 31 expiration date for taxable household income below \$250,000, but not for income above it, the vast majority of small-business owners wouldn’t be affected.

Just 3 percent of taxpayers with business income have income above \$250,000, and that 3 percent includes hedge fund managers, corporate lobbyists and big business CEOs earning extra income from sitting on the boards of other big businesses.

Tax cuts for small-business “job creators” has a much nicer ring to it than tax cuts for hedge fund managers.

A recent study of tax rates and economic growth since 1945 by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service said, “Tax rates affecting taxpayers at the top of the income distribution are currently at their lowest levels since the end of the second World War.”

The Congressional Research Service found no evidence that cutting taxes increased economic growth.

The report did find that “the top tax rate reductions appear to be associated with the increasing concentration of income at the top of the income distribution.”

No one should be alarmed at resetting top tax rates on income more than \$250,000 to their 1990s levels. After all, the Clinton era ended with the creation of 23 million jobs and a budget surplus.

It was the tax-cutting Bush era that ended in economic disaster. Our business has weathered the last four years since the economic meltdown and stayed true to our

focus — helping clients in manufacturing, green building, information technology and other professional services who are building sustainable businesses as well as nonprofit clients.

We’ve made hard trade-offs — continuing full employee health coverage but not providing raises our employees need to keep up with the rising cost of living.

This is a direct impact of our clients pulling in the reins on their spending as consumer demand remains low and governments cut budgets for infrastructure and social services, for example.

It makes no sense to give more tax breaks to the wealthy, which are paid for in part by laying off teachers, first responders, food safety inspectors and other public service workers.

It makes no sense to give more tax cuts to the wealthy instead of contracts to construction firms and manufacturers to transform our failing infrastructure built in the 19th and 20th centuries into efficient, safe, modern infrastructure fit for a 21st-century economy.

Rather than giving another \$1 trillion over the next decade in tax cuts for the richest 2 percent of Americans, let’s instead invest in making our businesses and communities stronger.

Let’s do what past generations did and fix our roads, bridges, railways, ports and mass transit systems.

Let’s invest in education and research and development to create jobs that provide living wages and good benefits, in healthy, innovative workplaces.

Rather than rewarding Wall Street speculators who wrecked our economy with more tax cuts, let’s make sure that real small businesses have the government-backed credit and assistance they need to not only sustain their businesses, but make them smarter and better.

Without these sorts of investments, and the innovations, jobs and customer demand they create, we will certainly see small businesses — the real job creators — feel even more of a squeeze and many more will fail.

Now that’s something our nation really can’t afford.

LAST

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spent following around the Ku Klux Klan when the group was much more prominent here to give our readers a picture of its membership.

I recall the conversations with leaders who wanted me to call them by their titles, Grand Dragon and Exalted Cyclops. The jarring discovery I wrote about was that an increasing number of the racist ranks was composed of women.

I recall being on hand for a big anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg when organizers, who were filming it, grew frustrated that few of the record number of re-enactors in the battle would lie down and die. They didn’t want to be left out of the fighting.

There was an inspiring Harrisburg High graduation when a young mother of three walked across the stage with her diploma, having dropped out then fought the district to come back and attend classes until she turned 21.

As a fairly new statehouse reporter, there were the weeks spent in Pittsburgh when Gov. Bob Casey underwent a life-saving, double-organ transplant.

I witnessed the impeachment trial of a state Supreme Court justice and incredible political machinations in the House and Senate, including a senator practically on his deathbed being wheeled into the Capitol so his party would win an important vote.

And I spent nearly 24 hours on Sept. 11, 2001, with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and will never forget the silence in the

press briefing area when Gov. Tom Ridge emotionally described what he had seen flying over Shanksville just hours after Flight 93 crashed there.

It has been a great two decades with this newspaper, the apex of which has been holding the position of opinions editor. It is incredible to have a job where you get to opine all day.

Our board got to sit down with governors, governor candidates, mayors, university presidents, district attorneys, survivors of abuse, union leaders, conservative think tank employees and hospital CEOs, among others.

There have been a host of important issues to write about, not the least of which was the Penn State child sex abuse scandal, when the editorial board decided to run an editorial calling for the firing of the university president and retirement of Joe Paterno, and the publisher and I made the final call to run the editorial on the front page.

I like to think we brought about positive change with our pages, or at the very least made people think a little differently about something important.

I also got to talk regularly with many letter and op-ed writers. We not only shared our thoughts on issues but struck up friendships.

During my time here, I am proud to say we increased the number of letters to the editor that ran in the newspaper, created graphic editorials called “Between the Lines” and held “The Big Story” forums in the community on important issues. We also became a pioneer among newspapers by tweeting news from editorial

board meetings and asking reader questions that were tweeted back to us.

My takeaway from all this is that good, quality local journalism hasn’t changed much in the time I have worked for a newspaper. The tools are different, but the basics are the same. And that won’t change with this next phase for the Patriot-News/PennLive. I will enjoy watching this new era that starts in a few weeks from the sidelines and I still will engage, just from a different vantage point.

So that’s it. Except, with some indulgence, for a few shout-outs on my way to the exit. There is my former statehouse colleague and good friend Peter Shelly, who, along with my husband, Barry Fox, showed me how much fun being a reporter could be and the beauty of not taking yourself too seriously.

George Hammond, my copy editor, has pulled my feet out of the fire too many times to recount here. I couldn’t have asked for a better companion over the last four years than Heather Long, the deputy opinions editor, who has certainly made me a smarter person.

And my boss, publisher John Kirkpatrick, gave me this opportunity despite all the negative hype that someone who leaves journalism for PR irretrievably goes to the dark side.

And most of all, I’d like to thank you, the readers, and all the people of this great community.

It has been an honor to serve you.

Jeanette Krebs is the editorial page editor, 255-8111 or jkrebs@pnco.com

GOP

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even more significantly, much, much too late.

Being a Republican County chairman in a 2 to 1 Republican County, I saw it firsthand. In the spring, we braced ourselves for an onslaught of excited volunteers and would-be voters, and — nothing.

Even a visit by the presumptive nominee, Mitt Romney, to our Lincoln Day Dinner in April did little to motivate our committee and volunteers. Oh, it was a fantastic event with a full house of excited people, but after it was over most folks walked out with a warm glow and proceeded to get on with their lives.

After all, there were endless summer vacations to plan, and all of that election stuff could wait until after

Labor Day. Unfortunately, that’s what Republicans do: They work, they worry about paying their bills, they take care of the kids, and when they get a chance to kick back and relax at the lake, the mountains or at the beach, they do it.

They are living, and loving, the American Dream.

We finally started to see real enthusiasm in mid-September, and by October we had a constant rush of people coming to our headquarters to volunteer, to donate or to get yard signs — which the Romney campaign was woefully late in supplying, by the way.

The only problem was that by the time our base got motivated, the Democrats had a huge head start on us; in fact, they had never stood down after their 2008 victory. Much like their candidate, Barack Obama, they never got out of campaign mode, and we tried to cram the entire process

into two months.

The Democrats had spent four years laying the groundwork for reelection, and we spent most of that time grumbling about side issues and trying to find the “perfect candidate,” between vacations, of course.

In retrospect, it’s a wonder we came as close as we did.

If we want to turn things around, we need to try to emulate our opponents and get to work now. We need to understand the difference between strategy and tactics.

Our goal is clear: keep the House and win the Senate in 2014 and take the White House in 2016.

We should have a strategy in place by spring to do that and then proceed tactically to achieve it.

It’s not going to be easy, but this time we might have one advantage.

With four more years of the Obama economy, we won’t be able to afford as many vacations.

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We welcome readers’ views and commentary:

AS I SEE IT: Essays of 800 words or fewer on subjects which readers have particular expertise, experience or interest. Please include your name, address and a telephone number where we can reach you during the day.

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ADDRESS: Letters to the Editor
The Patriot-News
2020 Technology Parkway
Suite 300
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
EMAIL: letters@pnco.com
FAX: 717-255-8456



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