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Immigration: How not to make legislative concessions

By Emile Schepers



Certain politicians act as if they were sleepwalking when they deal with complicated legislative issues.

A case in point is the vote in the Senate to throw \$600 million more into the useless and hopeless project of “sealing” the U.S.-Mexican border. The House had already passed the bill and President Obama signed the bill.

Although \$600 million might buy a lot of duct tape, it is not going to resolve the “problem” of “sealing” the border which is 1,900 miles long and runs through some extremely rugged landscape. And if they somehow did “seal” the border, a way would be found to come in through the Canadian side, or through the thousands of miles of coastline.

Senator Schumer (D-NY), one of only two people in the Senate when the vote was taken, and the Obama administration told immigrants rights advocates that this \$600 million is to sweeten the mood of the Republican Party politicians so that they will come out in favor of a generous legalization program for the undocumented at some future time.

To me it looks more like yet another T-bone steak thrown to a hungry wolf. The wolf will still be hungry no matter how many steaks you toss him, and he will end up by eating you. Besides,

one is teaching the wolf how to get T-bone steaks.

No matter how many concessions the government and the Democrats toss to the Republicans, if they are concessions that are not part of a single legislative instrument that gives us a humane, just, comprehensive and practical method of legalizing the undocumented and other necessary things, the G.O.P. will just keep upping the ante until the Democrats have no concessions left to make. But the G.O.P. wolves will still be hungry.

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Why? Because for them this is not about providing realistic, let alone fair, solutions to real problems. It is about election year demagogy. And since there is an election somewhere every year, this never stops.

Look at how the Republicans are upping the

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ante every day. First there came the Arizona law SB 1070 with imitators in the pipeline. Now, leading Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) and former friend of immigrants Lindsey Graham (R-SC), as well House Minority Leader Boehner, have begun to agitate for a change in the 14th Amendment, to take away citizenship from U.S. born children of undocumented immigrants.

Coming from another angle, some in the GOP say they won't support immigration reform unless they can get big new guest worker programs. And all these things are floated without any commitment whatsoever that the 11 million or so undocumented immigrants in the country will eventually get legal status as a result.

The White House and the Democratic leadership should stop making concessions which affect other people's lives, concessions which are given in exchange for absolutely nothing. Conceding such things is only designed to make it seem as if Democrats can be just as tough on immigration

as Republicans, a competition which the Republicans will win every time. Such a strategy loses the Democrats votes among Latinos and other important sectors. And it does not gain them votes from the anti-immigrant sectors, because the Republicans can always put forward yet more extreme rhetoric and demands.

Depending on the balance of power in the Congress and in the country, concessions may be necessary on this and other issues. We can't take a position of "all or nothing": Either perfect legislation or leave the 11 million to their fate. But making concessions without getting anything whatsoever in return is simply surrender.

Better to turn and face the wolf. If the government and the majority party would do this, they would find that in the Latino community and others, extra millions would turn out to support them on election day.



Emile Schepers writes for the People's World.

Denying citizenship to U.S. born children is racist

By PW Editorial Board

Some members of Congress are pushing to challenge the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which grants automatic citizenship to anyone born in the country.

Republicans are using the issue as an attempt to foster political fear-mongering in as November elections near. The real argument, activists say is rooted in the battle for comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway toward legalizing the country's estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants. According to a recent study published this week by the Pew Hispanic Center, about 340,000 of the 4.3 million babies born in the U.S. in 2008 - or 8 percent - had at least one undocumented parent.

The study notes 79 percent of the 5.1 million children born to undocumented parents in the U.S. were born here, making them citizens.

Based on March 2009 census figures, children of undocumented immigrants make up 7 percent of all people in the country younger than 18 years old. About 85 percent of undocumented

immigrants are Latino.

A nationwide survey in June, found that 56 percent of those polled opposed changing the 14th Amendment, while 41 percent supported it.

Meanwhile the Senate passed a \$600 million measure Thursday to add Border Patrol agents and equipment. The House passed the measure earlier.

"These votes show that both parties are more interested in political posturing and finger-pointing than in finding real solutions," said Clarissa Martinez De Castro, director of Immigration and National Campaigns with the National Council of La Raza, in a statement.

"The lack of solutions in Washington means that states are pushing ahead with measures that move toward legitimizing the racial profiling of Latinos and others, while allowing politicians to demonize and scapegoat minority communities for their political gain. It's time to put an end to pandering to political extremes and get to the real solutions that American voters want."

We agree.

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Health reform to close Medicare “donut hole”

By Joel Wendland

More than 750,000 Medicare beneficiaries have so far received relief from the so-called prescription drug donut hole as a result of President Obama's health reform law.

The Bush administration and Republican-controlled Congress created the “donut hole” with their 2003 Medicare privatization law. Essentially the law created a “drug benefit” that actually forced Medicare beneficiaries to pay hundreds, even thousands, each year more for prescription drugs.

Because of the Republican-authored law, current Medicare beneficiaries pay 25 percent of the cost of their prescription drugs. Medicare covers the rest up to about \$2,800 annually. After that amount the enrollee pays the full cost of their drugs until the price tag reaches close to \$5,000. This gap in coverage is known as the “donut hole.”

Government estimates show that about 25 percent of Medicare enrollees reach the “donut hole” each year.

“High prescription drugs costs are a problem for many seniors and other Medicare enrollees with limited incomes,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. “These checks are an important first step in helping them afford the medications they need - and are evidence of how Americans are already seeing the very real benefits of the Affordable Care Act.”

Sebelius also touted health reform's projected positive impact on the overall financial soundness of Medicare. “From strengthening the long-term future of Medicare as evidenced by the recent Medicare Trustees report, to saving seniors and the disabled money on everything from prescrip-



tion drug costs to preventive services,” she pointed out, “the Affordable Care Act is helping to preserve and protect Medicare.”

This year millions of Medicare beneficiaries have received or will receive a \$250 cash payment to cover expenses incurred after falling into the “donut hole.” In 2011, as a result of health reform, beneficiaries will receive a 50 percent discount on brand name drugs in the “donut hole” and generic drug prices will also fall substantially.

In 2013, drug prices will fall faster. By 2020, the “donut hole” will be closed and beneficiaries will pay only 25 percent of the cost of their drugs, as now mandated under Medicare.

Critics of the Republican-authored Medicare privatization law also noted that it was intended to shift billions in federal tax dollars to private insurance companies, force low-income seniors to pay more out-of-pocket expenses, and create long-term financial problems for the popular Medicare program. Health reform addressed many of these concerns. In addition to eliminating the “donut hole,” the law removes some of the costliest privatization schemes.

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LOCAL NEWS

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Cleveland protests Wall Street

By Rick Nagin

Charging that “Wall Street values are strangling our community”, 75 union and other activists held a lunch time rally in front of the downtown offices of the PNC and Huntington banks.

The event, part of National Day of Action against Wall St. banks, was initiated by the Service Employees International Union and included Cleveland Jobs With Justice, the Cleveland Council of MoveON and the North Shore AFL-CIO.

Demonstrators carried a large cardboard check for \$3.4 billion representing damage caused to the Greater Cleveland community in terms of massive foreclosures, layoffs and cuts in public services stemming from the policies of the big banks.

“We demand that Wall Street pay up,” said Anthony Caldwell of SEIU. “We demand the banks stop gouging the public and renegotiate interest rates. We want them to open lending to small businesses to create jobs.”

“The banks were bailed out,” said Harriet Applegate, Executive Secretary of the North Shore AFL-CIO, “while the people suffer. This is not going to continue. Enough is enough!”

“We worked to elect President Obama and an agenda for change,” she said. “Whether it was a public option (for health insurance), or climate change legislation or federal funding to the states to save jobs or consumer protection, we have met a brick wall of opposition funded by millions and millions of dollars that corporations have spent on lobbying.”

Alborozante celebracion del primer grito de independencia Ecuatoriano

Por Wilmer Barzallo

En un ambiente de completa algarabía y gozo la comunidad ecuatoriana de Connecticut celebró en New Haven el aniversario 201 del Primer Grito de Independencia. Alrededor de dos mil personas se congregaron para disfrutar del desfile por las principales calles de New Haven y también del festival artístico-musical en el parqueadero adyacente al consulado ecuatoriano en las calles Church y George.

El evento liderado por el Comité Cívico Cultural Ecuatoriano de Connecticut contó con la efectiva participación de más de veinte organizaciones comunitarias las cuales deleitaron al público con su música y danzas, colorido y folclore típicos de este país latinoamericano.

Como consecuencia de la profunda crisis económica, política y social que azotó Ecuador, especialmente en las dos últimas décadas, miles y miles de ecuatorianos abrumados ante las penurias han optado por emigrar hacia los Estados Unidos y también a Europa. Aquí, en la tierra del Tío Sam, y en Nueva Inglaterra la comunidad ecuatoriana en parte tuvo que hacerle frente a las mismas penosas prácticas nativistas que a su debido tiempo fueron dirigidas a las comunidades irlandesa o italiana. Hoy, el ecuatoriano, luego de arduo batallar, goza del respeto y consideración por su filosofía del “buen vivir” y sobre todo su altísima ética de trabajo.

El fenómeno migratorio ecuatoriano como el fenómeno migratorio mundial en general es el fiel reflejo o consecuencia de los mismos crueles e inhumanas motivaciones que llavaron a los países europeos a colonizar Indio-américa y Africa con la única intención de usurpar y saquear los recursos de vida sin consideración alguna por sus habitantes. Que ironía pensar que hace casi doscientos años creímos habernos liberado del yugo colonial para siempre, sin embargo lo encontramos disfrazado bajo el nombre de “libre mercado” en el que el único libre, por supuesto, es el “opresor de siempre”.

“No hay mal que dure cien años” dice el adagio popular en su afán de indicar que todo tiene un fin. Un mundo sin colonialismo, neocolonialismo, opresión y explotación es posible siempre y cuando nos decidamos a construirlo. ¡Por que esperar!

Al mismo tiempo que emprendemos el desafío por un mundo justo y solidario celebremos no sólo a Montúfar o Quiroga, héroes que levantaron el 10 de Agosto el Primer Grito de Independencia en contra de España, sino a todos los protagonistas de actos heroicos de resistencia y patriotismo como Rumiñahui y Eplichima, Eugenio Espejo y Juan Montalvo, “el héroe niño Abdón Calderón” y “el indio” Eloy Alfaro y sobre todo al pueblo luchador que nunca desmaya en su anhelo de completa libertad.

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