

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2008

Opposing view: Oklahoma is doing its job



## Opposing view: Oklahoma is doing its job

**Critics don't get it:  
Illegal immigration is about more than just economics.**

By Randy Terrill

By now, no one credibly disputes that illegal immigration is a serious and growing problem.

Given Washington's inability or unwillingness to address the issue, no one should be surprised that states such as Oklahoma, Arizona and Georgia are taking the lead. It's federalism in action. Just as states paved the way for welfare reform in the 1990s, they are pointing the way on immigration reform.

The federal government's failure to police our nation's borders has functionally turned every state into a border state and indirectly imposed a tax on each and every citizen – especially in the areas of health care, education, welfare and corrections. From a state perspective, it is indisputable that illegal immigration is a net financial drain.



In Oklahoma, our new law tackles this issue by cracking down on identity theft, terminating taxpayer-funded benefits for illegal aliens, empowering state and local law enforcement to detain illegal aliens for deportation, and requiring businesses to verify employment eligibility of workers or face serious legal and financial consequences.

The overwhelming majority of Oklahomans – more than 80% – support our law, and I am confident national polls would generate similar results.

Even more important, Oklahoma's law appears to be achieving its intended purpose. Numerous reports indicate that illegal aliens are leaving the state.

Some naysayers claim states that unilaterally enact real, meaningful immigration reform place themselves at a "competitive disadvantage" economically – the same argument once used to defend the subjugation of an entire group of people through the institution of slavery.

Those critics miss the point. The illegal immigration debate is about a whole lot more than just economics. It's about fundamental principles and values: respect for the rule of law, upholding our state and national sovereignty, basic human dignity and the immorality of exploiting cheap illegal-alien slave labor, and protecting taxpayers from waste, fraud and abuse.

This issue is also about elected officials going to the Capitol – whether it's in Oklahoma City or Washington, D.C. – and doing what the people elected us expect us to do.

Randy Terrill is an Oklahoma Republican state representative and author of the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2007.