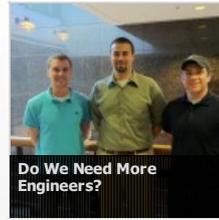


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What Midwest Leaders Are Doing To Lay Out The Welcome Mat For Immigrants

February 22, 2012 | 5:21 AM | By Nala Boodhoo

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Last year, Alabama enacted the country's most restrictive laws against illegal immigration. One week later, Dayton, Ohio, set out a welcome mat for immigrants. And it's not alone.

In the second part of [our look at immigrants and the Midwest](#), we've found many local governments are trying to attract immigrants as an economic development strategy.

Dayton got attention from all over the world last fall when its city commission unanimously approved a plan called [Welcome Dayton](#) to make it an "immigrant-friendly city." Since then, the town has been inundated.

"We have people calling us from South Africa that read about us in the local paper," Tom Wahlrab, one of the plan's architects, said recently in Detroit. "We have people from North China that want to immigrate here, they thought we could help them."



Tom Wahlrab from Welcome Dayton speaks to Global Detroit.

All that attention so far is just for a plan. It's a rebranding campaign for Dayton, as well as a framework for helping local government make it easier to integrate immigrants into life there, whether that's buying a house, starting a business or learning English.

Wahlrab spoke at the invitation of [Global Detroit](#), a network of organizations and individuals that describes itself as promoting immigration as an economic development strategy.

Dayton's attention might have made a few other Midwestern cities a little envious. Global Detroit's Steve Tobocman was quick to point out that Dayton isn't the only one trying to get immigrants to relocate.

"We've been at it a lot longer, we've attracted a lot more money," he said at the event. "But I believe there is a certain elegance and opportunity in the plan that Dayton has put together. They've done certain things so profoundly right that I think we have a lot to learn from it."

Global Detroit recently received a \$2.6 million grant from the Kellogg Foundation that it will use in part to fund small businesses in two predominantly Arab and Hispanic immigrant neighborhoods in Detroit. The money will also go to further fund its Detroit Welcome Mat initiative, which involves 75 local social service agencies that work with immigrants.

Audrey Singer, who studies immigration for the Brookings Institution in Washington, said modern waves of migrants into the U.S. have mostly gone to Chicago, the South or Southwestern United States. Those who relocate to the Midwest are different.

The Midwest attracts "a very strong, small group of immigrants who have higher education levels

About Changing Gears



Changing Gears explores the economic transformation of the industrial Midwest, through the stories of people driving and experiencing this change.

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Throughout the past two years, Changing Gears has looked at the role that newcomers play in the Midwest. This afternoon, we'll be talking about them — and talking with you. Join us at 3 pm ET/2 pm CT for "Hidden Assets," a call-in show airing on WBEZ Chicago, Michigan Radio and ideastream Cleveland. We'll also ... [Continue reading](#) →

On Wednesday, Join Us For "Hidden Assets," A Call-In Show And Live Chat on Immigration



much higher than other parts of the country," she said. Her [research](#) shows that in Cleveland, there are 169 immigrants with at least a bachelor's degree for every 100 immigrants with a high school diploma or less. Pittsburgh has the highest ratio of any metropolitan area in the country – 391 high skilled immigrants for every 100 low-skilled immigrants.

In the U.S., those concentrations of high skilled immigrants are found only along the East Coast – and across the Great Lakes states.

Singer thinks that's one reason why governments in this region tend to be more welcoming to immigrants.



Addison's Mayor, Larry Hartwig (Niala Boodhoo)

One such place is Addison, Illinois, about 20 miles west of Chicago. It's a small town – technically, a village – and the type of place where the Mayor has his home phone listed on the town's [website](#). In the past fifteen years, the number of immigrants living in Addison has grown to almost half the town's 40,000 residents.

Addison's Mayor, Larry Hartwig, told me that 34 percent of the community is also foreign-born. While most of the immigrant population is Mexican, there's also a growing Polish, Albanian and Southeast Asian population. A Hindu temple was recently built nearby.

I spoke with Hartwig at the Henry Hyde Community Resource Center. It was deliberately built in what used to be a tough neighborhood, in hopes of turning it into a more hospitable place.

Now, about one hundred local kids come here after school. There are 750 adults who use it in the morning and evenings for ESL classes – so many, in fact, that the center has a waiting list.

Hartwig says that integrating immigrants, some of whom have come directly from small towns in Mexico, has required adjustments for everyone. It's something the town has worked hard at for the past 15 years. A few years ago, the village hired consultants who provided cross cultural training for key people in town. Those people, in turn, have trained others – even the local PTA groups at Addison's schools.

"From village halls to the schools to the park district everyone's making a concerted effort to see what can be done to integrate the community," said Kiki Deluna, a first generation Mexican-American who is the executive director of the Resource Center.

Unlike Dayton or Detroit, Addison never promoted itself as a place for immigrants to move to – they came on their own. But Mayor Hartwig said that now the town realizes "the essential role immigrants play in our economic development".

Hartwig wants to be clear that he doesn't think Addison is doing things perfectly. But he knows that Addison has to be successful at integrating the entire community.

"Immigrants are going to be an important part of our workforce," he said. "If we are out in front welcoming and integrating and making it work I think it's going to give us a great competitive advantage, over other areas of the country, and probably other areas of the world."



Kids exercising in the afterschool program at Addison's neighborhood resource center (Niala Boodhoo)

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Staying Connected To The Old Culture, While Fitting In With The New

When we asked what cultural traditions people have kept or lost, many wrote about the difficulty of fitting into American culture while staying connected to their own roots. Yen Azzaro tried to learn her mother's native Mandarin Chinese in college, but never mastered it. "I never learned how to read or write Chinese. Sometimes I ... [Continue reading](#) →

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Dave Francis, Retired Professor of Earth Sciences

REMEMBER

THE LIBERALS WILL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP PRESIDENT OBAMA IN POWER. EVEN OVERLOOKING ILLEGAL ALIENS VOTING?

Why doesn't Congress revise the original E-Verify plus bill introduced by Judiciary Chairman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Homeland Security Chairman Peter King (R-NY) in 2005? The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4437) had all the stringent enforcement needed? It required the use of E-verify and made it a felony to be in the USA illegally. It also increased penalties for employing illegal workers to \$7,500 for first time offenses, \$15,000 for second offenses, and \$40,000 for all subsequent offenses. It also, caused the housing of removed aliens to become a felony crime. It passed in the House by a vote of 239 to 182, but questionably it didn't find passage in the Senate?

The usual stomach churning zealots complained, so REAL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT never took center stage, with the combined efforts of a variety of migrant, humanitarian, and religious organizations, and other radical groups. Policies that providing federal or state welfare as UNFUNDED MANDATES forced on all the American population by court order and extorted from your taxes. By neither political party voting for the new mandated version of E-Verify or the Birthright Citizenship bill, millions still attracted by jobs and a free reservoir of welfare programs, will still buy a seat on an international flight as a tourist or just cross that border.

To some extent revitalized E-Verify, "the Legal Workforce Act (H.R.2885) will heavily penalize businesses for hiring illegal aliens, who are stealing jobs from the majority of low income workers. Second in line of Merit is the "Birthright Citizenship Bill (H.R.140) that by Amendment, will prevent the welfare abundance of public welfare check assistance to the illegal parent of a child smuggled or already here, if neither parent is a U.S. Citizen.

The E-Verify system can identify illegal migrants and immigrants after hiring and unless they can further substantiate their immigration status, they will be dismissed. This is an easy, none evasive and simple way to qualify an applicant, by inputting the personal data in a company terminal. Then to resolve any discrepancy you travel to nearest Social Security office. Mitt Romney has spelled E-Verify out, as "ATTRITION THROUGH ENFORCEMENT—or Self Deportation.

2005 Enforcement Immigration Law (H.R. 4437)

Criminalizes

violations of federal immigration law, including illegal presence, which indirectly shifts the responsibility of immigration enforcement to state and local law authorities.

Expands the definition of "aggravated felony" to include smuggling offenses, illegal entry and reentry crimes. Reduces the maximum period of voluntary departure from 120 to 60 days. Reaffirms states' "inherent authority" to assist with immigration law enforcement. Requires that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provide a training manual and "pocket guide" relating to enforcement of immigration laws to state and local law enforcement authorities. In addition, DHS is required to make training for state and local law enforcement available "through as many means possible." Receipt of such training is not a prerequisite for state and local assistance with immigration law enforcement. Authorizes funds for grants to state and local law enforcement for equipment and other products used in enforcing immigration law. Funds in the amount of \$1 billion each fiscal year are authorized for the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP). Bars states and localities that prohibit state and local law enforcement of immigration law from receipt of funds otherwise granted to states to reimburse expenses related illegal immigrants. Requires that aliens who violate certain provisions of immigration law (those subject to a removal order, subject to a voluntary departure agreement, anyone who has overstayed an I-94, and anyone whose visa has been revoked) be listed in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.

Border Security

Provides for a variety of new technology to assist DHS in monitoring ports of entry and land borders. Establishes a Border Security Advisory Committee that includes representatives of state and local government. Allows homeland security grants funds to be used to support border enforcement activities. Provides for additional fencing to be constructed along the U.S. – Mexico Border and calls for a study to examine the construction of a fence along the Northern/Canadian Border.

Worksite Enforcement and Employer Verification

Establishes an electronic/phone system employment verification process and requires participation by all employers. Requires re-verification of all previously hired employees under the new system. Federal, state and local governments would have met this requirement within three years of enactment of the legislation. Increases civil penalties for hiring individuals without employment authorization. Expands requirements for employment verification to day-laborer sites.

There is so much corruption in Washington, which is why illegal entry is not a felony. Doesn't this to all of us, that Washington DC has no intention of approving any real immigration enforcement? That we must keep paying for everybody who flies in from anywhere, or climbs the fence or just parts simple barbed rusty wire?

There is only one cure for the corruption in federal agencies and that is joining the TEA PARTY. Thousands of fraudulent programs will be exposed and billions of dollars will be saved. This confronts the rot that has entered the Democratic and the Republican parties, and the astronomical deficit that America is suffering from. Read some unrevealed evidence at Judicial Watch, that is a legal non-profit website. Judicial Watch is the opposite of the Communist backed ACLU; a

panderer to the illegal alien invaders. In addition, NumbersUSA gives you in depth analysis of costs to taxpayers and insider news from Congress. Lastly, the positive controversial website of "American Patrol" gives you one-click bridging news editions to the nationwide media, where the truth prevails in articles suppressed by the overwhelming Liberal press. It is only new TEA PARTY leaders will reveal the corrupt in Congress and return us to a small efficient government, with no free crony handouts to wealthy donors.

Join your chapter of your local TEA PARTY. Only the TEA PARTY LEADERSHIP has the backbone to shred the current tax code and provide a fair and equitable tax system, without any loopholes for anybody. Every possible means available currently and in the future will be utilized to secure our borders, to halt Sanctuary Cities, Chain Migration, but adopt a regulated Guest Worker program, without a path to citizenship. It is solely the obligation of every American voter to check for non citizens registering for all future elections. That every person voting must display official Picture ID, as there has been progressive voting by non citizens.

Everybody is complaining about both parties in Washington, but cannot find a few minutes to contact their Senators or Congress persons at 202-224-3121 and demand the vote for both federal mandatory E-Verify or amend the 'Birthright Citizenship' Bill. Once enacted into law a massive exodus will commence, as illegal aliens and family members will return to their country of origin.

11 months ago

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Pamela

We need Americans, in America. We need to be figuring out, how to make life better for those who fight, bleed and die for this country. Not ILLEGALS or LEGAL IMMIGRANTS. We don't need more people. We need MORE for the AMERICAN CITIZENS. Traitors.

11 months ago

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Changing Gears explores the economic transformation of the industrial Midwest, through the stories of people driving and experiencing this change.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Measuring The Costs And Benefits Of Retraining

Measuring the success of retraining programs used to be straightforward. You just looked at how many people got better paying jobs. Now the emphasis is shifting from how job seekers benefit to how taxpayers benefit too. That's because some federal funds for workforce development are shrinking, and local agencies have to do more to make ... Continue reading →



To Prepare Workers, Retraining Programs Try To Predict The Future

Sarah Alvarez contributed to this story. Unemployment numbers in the Midwest are bad. Not as bad as when the recession was at its worst, but there are still a lot of people looking for jobs. Even so, we keep hearing that some employers can't find enough skilled workers. Michigan Governor Rick Snyder says in his ... Continue reading →

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