

Is Immigration “Indispensable?”

Understanding it is!

BY RICHARD PELTO

Recently a major Washington State newspaper printed an op-ed article with the headline that Washington State’s immigrants are “indispensable.”

The article provided excellent insight into those who support the massive importation of illegal and legal immigrants to this country and region. One writer, was Pramila Jayapal, an immigrant from India who makes a living promoting illegal and legal immigration through her organization, One America, (formerly known as the Hate-Free Zone), and the other was, Renee R. Sinclair, an executive director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Jayapal appeals for her support from a strange combination of leftist-leaning groups, including a wide range of democratic party and socialist groups, and from corporate/civic groups, while Sinclair represents the policies of corporate U.S. that vigorously pursues assumptions of unlimited growth while seeking ever-increasing access to cheap labor. That combination of disparate groups adds up to the power and money influencing U.S. politicians of both parties to push for legalizing illegal immigration in order to maximize an assumed unlimited growth.

The article also made clear that the writers are unconcerned about the impact importing millions of people has on the sustainability of our society. Like most followers of mindless economic

cant, these supporters of importing millions of people ignore the uncomfortable reality that that this country’s and this region’s resources are limited in availability. They blindly pursue policy that fosters “growth” while ignoring what exacerbates crowded freeways, the impact of financial markets collapsing, a climate absorbing too much CO₂ emission, an overburdened and struggling medical care and criminal justice system, and continuing pollution and build-up of toxic waste laying waste to ecological integrity.

At a time when it is imperative to understand what is cracking the foundations of our economic and social system, Jayapal and Sinclair blindly pursue an immigration policy that demands that the now top-heavy and wobbly economic structure — already straining to remain balanced under the weight of unsustainability — be built even higher while blindly being rooted in the premise that we can never exhaust this Earth’s resources. That is especially absurd because it ignores the welfare of future generations because those resources enabled the industrialization and population explosion that came only because of their cheaply-available abundance.

Because population growth is so rapid in Washington State, and its “footprint” is growing so quickly, it is, at the least, necessary to fully understand the consequences of policy that encourages ever-more of its growth. Let alone the need to understand the hubris involved in calling it “indispensable.” (In its introduction, the study defines “indispensable” as any worker, with the inference that unlimited numbers of them defines the absolutely necessary aspect)

The article quotes findings of a “report” put together by Jayapal’s well-financed, corporate-supported organization. It notes it looks “factually” at many immigrant economic growth impacts by providing selective statistics that range from tax rev-

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enue to buying power to impacts on work force. It does so while selectively ignoring — and not bothering to assess — the impacts of costs involving taxpayer support for immigrant usage of schools, medical care, subsidized housing, welfare, and many other societal costs. The article selectively focuses on a few educated and accomplished people who have come here while ignoring the fact that the majority of the illegal and legal immigrants here are Hispanics who on average have less than an eighth-grade education and limited language ability who disproportionately contribute to this society's poverty.



Articles like this help influence the extensive number of legislative public policies that “lure” ever more immigration-dominated population growth. Many laws have been passed that encourage more illegal and legal immigrants to come here. Even during this time of financial duress and budget cutting, it should be noted governor Gregoire spent \$344,000 in June, 2008 to establish a welcome-immigrants group called the Washington New Americans Policy Council. And, despite a need for extensive budget cuts, she has promised \$2 million more to that group through 2010. The purpose of this council is to facilitate making as many immigrants citizens as possible. She is clearly unaware or doesn't care about the population-growth impacts ever-more hundreds of thousands of immigrants have on this region's sustainability.

Sometimes you have to read between the lines of the political process. The Gregoire government recently noted that it assumed, based on IRS information, that approximately 370,000 persons in Washington who file for the Earned Income Tax Credit will apply for a rebate under legislation it proposes for fiscal year 2010. After consultation with the Department of Social and Health Services, the Gregoire administration further stated that it assumes a high proportion of claimants will not have English as their primary language. It had to make this clear because it requires additional advertising outreach, forms translation, and additional language scripts for the automated phone application system to work efficiently. In addition, the IRS indicates that there is a higher than average error rate for earned income claims. This higher error rate requires added collection effort for claims paid in error. The Gregoire department told the IRS it has assumed that denied claims can be settled with minimal formal appeals. Should experience show otherwise, it added, additional FTEs would be hired in later fiscal years to handle the appeals caseload. Clearly costs involved in luring illegals here is not a priority. Also the sales tax increase pushed by Gregoire would have directed most of the tax generated to be dedicated to government healthcare. One of the most basic appeals being bandied about for imposing a higher sales tax is the maintenance of the children's health care program that serves a reported 100,000 children. In 2008, \$191 million of Washington State tax dollars were spent on healthcare for illegal aliens. That \$191 million would constitute 40 percent of the sales tax to be collected in 2010 through the proposed sales' tax increase. The high price of that is due to the fact that just under 20,000 in the children's program are the children of illegal aliens, and that providing this benefit acts as a powerful magnet for even more illegal entry. Pushing “child welfare” needs has become a major avenue for legislators to aid illegal immigrants. Take the Washington State Migrant Council, a Head Start agency. It is a \$31 million agency with more than 700 employees serving roughly 3,000 children at 25 educational and

child care centers in nine counties around the state. There are many other factors this Jayapal article ignores in making the case that illegal/legal immigration is “indispensable.” The most recent example is ignoring the recent arrest of 32 of over 50 identified illegal-immigrant Honduran drug gang members operating in downtown Seattle.

Crime is a very serious consequence of immigration. The Center for Immigration Studies provided a February, 2009 report that says, “the growth of gang activity is directly related to the growth of illegal immigration. In fact, the most rapidly-expanding gangs are primarily immigrant-based. Up to 90 percent of some gang membership is illegal alien. Many gangs are already playing pivotal roles alongside drug cartels, in some cases acting as frontline offense as they make their way into the United States. The bottom line is that the United States cannot stop the spread of dangerous gangs into our neighborhoods without addressing immigration. More enforcement and state/local cooperation with federal agencies is imperative. Conversely, anything that amounts to an “amnesty” would only benefit the gangs and facilitate more crime.”

Thus, a ‘dangerous side effect’ of America’s failure to control its border, and the nation’s encouragement of high levels of illegal immigration has resulted in the spread of violent transnational gangs across the United States, especially including Maryland, Virginia and Washington State, the CIS report adds. The report says that these gangs are responsible for virtually the entire spectrum of criminal activity, from nuisance crimes like graffiti to murder, and some are becoming increasingly well-organized and operating as sophisticated crime syndicates across national borders. Local police are well aware of gangs like MS-13, and, especially, the growth of Russian, Nigerian, Somalian, Sudanese, Vietnamese and Chinese gangs.

Recent newspaper reports say that illegal immigrants are filling the Yakima County Jail, and taxpayers are paying for it. From July 2006 to June 2007, the Yakima Jail housed 381 illegal immigrants, costing taxpayers \$2 million dollars for that year alone. Department of Corrections Director Steve Robertson says it has been that way “for

a while now.” Yakima County isn’t the only place with that problem. In addition, he added, “many of the criminals pretend they are citizens.” Thus, illegal immigrants take up ten percent of the money spent every year on the Yakima County Jail.

There are many immigrant costs besides crime. These costs must be considered when discussing how “indispensable” immigration is to this state. In the last 20 years, the most rapid-growth in Washington-State education offerings at taxpayer expense have been English for Second Language classes. Also, medical costs have dramatically increased due to emergency service requirements for illegal immigrants. Subsidized housing opportunities for illegal and legal immigrants were abundant

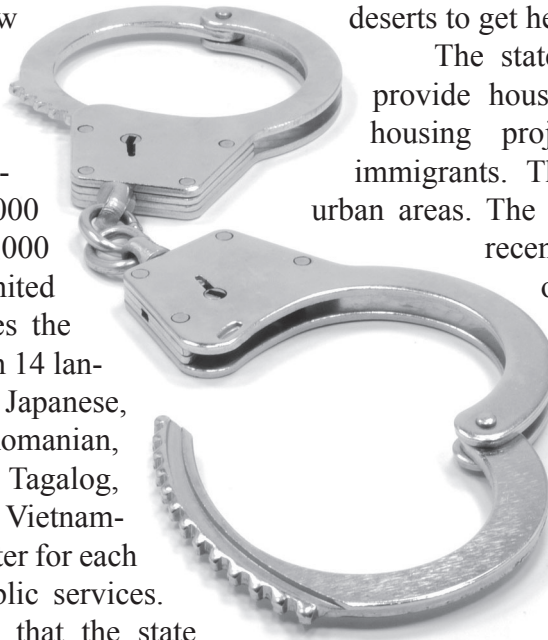


during the sub-prime heyday. In case someone is denied these benefits, the state provides legal help to illegal and legal immigrants through the Northwest Immigrant Rights group at a cost of \$6 million by March of 2009. Legislation even raises questions of whether legislators are less concerned with recent deep budget cuts in programs directed toward citizens than in protecting immigrants’ rights in deportation cases.

Locally and nationally, supporters of increased numbers of illegal immigrants say they should be “brought out of the shadows.” Obviously, illegals

choose to enter these more metaphorical “shadows” because it clearly benefits them to do so. Taking away those benefits takes away the incentive to be in them.

The benefits provided in these “shadows” are ubiquitous. Corporate and state tax money is provided to maintain a toll-free telephone line for immigrants. Besides the \$6,000 provided by AT&T, the city of Seattle is spending about \$10,000 to publicize the new number mainly using non-English newspapers, posters and community groups. Of course this is probably necessitated because of roughly 600,000 Seattle residents, about 100,000 were born outside the United States. Thus, the city assumes the phone line must be provided in 14 languages: Amarinya or Amharic, Japanese, Khmer, Lao, Mandarin, Romanian, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Tigrigna, Ukrainian and Vietnamese. And providing an interpreter for each category is costly for all public services. Few people may understand that the state deliberately incentivizes illegal immigration, but it is more important to understand that because of that, the state deliberately chooses to do nothing to enforce laws that are directed toward dealing with illegal immigration. Washington is one of the very few states that refused to implement a national “Real Id” act. Instead, it gives driver’s licenses to illegal aliens by allowing Mexico-provided Matricula cards as identification in getting one, making it clear they want illegals enabled once they arrive here. In addition, many state benefits and services are dispensed without any regard to somebody’s immigration status or careful checking of easily forged documents, so it’s not surprising that illegal immigrants are flocking to Washington and straining its sustainability. The state also refuses to move to implement a cheaply-available and reliable E-Verify program that essentially guarantees that companies will not hire people who have broken our law.



But most of the costs taxpayers must bear involve education. Providing these benefits is a major reason so many illegals are attracted here. Getting free K-12 education is only part of the lure and just one of many “benefits” of being in the “shadows.” The schools here take the children to school in a bus, give them food and books, while in the states south of our border none of this provided. It’s no wonder so many even risk death crossing deserts to get here.

The state also uses many methods to provide housing for illegals. Many public housing projects are heavily filled by immigrants. This applies both in rural and urban areas. The Franklin County Farm Bureau recently bought 10 acres just north of the Road 170 and Ringold Road intersection in eastern Washington from the Washington State Bureau of Reclamation for a 100-bed project in order to build a housing facility for seasonal (and mostly illegal) farm workers. The state Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development is in the second phase of reviewing an application for funding after completing the preliminary project design. In the past, many of those workers have camped on state land at Ringold, where there have been conflicts with fishermen and problems with waste disposal. Some people might think immigrants are “indispensable” because facts about the degree of immigration impacts are not easily available. An important factor that many citizens are too slowly growing aware of is the “growth” problem. Most are also unaware of the impact immigration has on them, especially during economic duress.

Local census undercounting must influence that unawareness. Snohomish County estimates it had a 33 percent undercount of illegal immigrants after the 2000 census. And the Census Bureau generally admits to a repeated 2 to 7 percent total undercount. But it is much higher for illegal immigrants, who constitute the enormous increase in im-

migration in the last ten years. In 1997-98, official estimates of illegals nationally ran from 2 to 4 million; today, the estimate runs from 11 to 30 million. That constitutes unprecedented growth. To further illustrate census problems one should note that in the early 1990s the Census Bureau said U.S. population would hit 272.7 million by the end of 1999. Later it arrived at a “revised” figure for the year 2000 of 284.5 million. A jump of almost 12 million! What appears to be census’s major Achilles’ heel is illegal immigration. It’s clear it’s not capable of counting the additional millions pouring through public policy-induced porous borders every year. A few years ago, Bear-Stearns, a major financial firm, reported its correlative data showed there were at least 20 million illegal immigrants in the country at a time when most newspapers, being true to the policy of only reporting bottom census estimates, were reporting there were 11 million. It is clear that accurate counting is not

a high priority of the government, and for some it may be obvious why, given the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s consistent push to enact amnesty-like legislation attracting ever-more illegal and legal immigrants.

Nationally, from 1990 to 2000 the U.S. population increased by 13 percent during a time of unprecedented immigration, and despite a native population fertility rate that dropped below 2.1 in 1972. That is significant given that Washington State numbers are projected to climb from 5,610,000 to a projected 8 plus million by 2020, given immigration-driven population-growth impacts continue to be ignored. To understand only why traffic is

congested, one should note that King County added 122,000 people from 2000 to 2007, a 7 percent gain. Snohomish County, 70,000, an 11.7 percent gain, and Pierce County gained 72,000, a 10.3 percent gain.

How do we know that most of that growth comes from immigration, given the difficulties in accurately counting illegal aliens? This data makes this impact clear: 23 percent of all births in the Seattle-area are to immigrant mothers; \$375 million was spent in 2005 on state-wide translation and interpretative services, and this was later considered not adequate for funding immigrant-related court procedures, and one in four Seattle School District students are children of immigrants. In the Puget Sound region most conservative estimates are that 200,000 plus entered it within the last ten-year period, and that contributed significantly to the fact that Washington State population grew by 93,514 from July, 2006 to July,

2007. And in the whole U.S., the Hispanic population doubled from the period 2000 to 2006 to 42.5 million, with a projected impact of 102.6 million by 2050. And, given the fact that 32.7 percent have no medical insurance, 22 percent live in poverty, and only 12 percent over 25 have college degrees, it is doubly important to understand how and whether these population-growth trends can be and should be sustained.

Can unsustainability continue to be ignored when the Puget Sound Regional Council notes that since 1950, the population of King County increased by 137 percent? If that growth is determined by policy, and that policy is unchanged, do the politicians



consider if there are limits to this growth? And at what point will this become seriously obvious? And is it not asked how this relates to “smart growth” and “sustainable growth” policies? Especially ones that ignore the real meaning of sustainability, and try to push something like the oxymoronish “sustainable growth.”

Immigration contributes to population growth in a two-pronged way. It does so both through migration and birth rates. In fact, as noted above, this area is experiencing faster immigrant birth-rate growth than native, given published reports that immigrants are about 11 percent of the population but constitute 23 percent of births. Immigrants have the lowest wages, and are the biggest single contributor to the poverty level. Census says immigrants earned an average of \$33,000 in 2007. In 2005, \$9.4 million was targeted for immigrants by Seattle city government. In addition, immigrants received many “non-targeted” services. Examples are subsidized rents and access to what gained notoriety as sub-prime home loans.

So, is Jayapal and Sinclair right about immigration’s “indispensableness?” By making this case it is clear why the corporate-and-city-sponsored, Jayapal-headed “One America” consistently lobbies the city council about illegal-immigrant obstacles to gaining tax-payer supplied benefits. For example, it recently argued it is wrong to have to produce reliable identification. One of its employees, Heather Holman, expressed dismay to city/county officials that there is too much requirement of documentation in accessing social services while, at the same time, she pushed for taxpayer subsidization of interpreters for up-to 102 languages.

In conclusion, these verities must be understood if this region doesn’t seriously address mostly-immigration driven population-growth consequences:

- A finite region can support only a limited

number of humans. There is therefore a regional “carrying capacity” for humans. This involves the maximum number of people that a given part of the environment can maintain indefinitely.

- It is an axiom of ecological science that a population which has grown larger than the carrying capacity of its environment uses resources faster than they are regenerated by that environment, and produces waste faster than the environment can absorb it without being degraded.

- It’s axiomatic also that a population that overshoots carrying capacity will subsequently decline in number, to return to a level at or below carrying capacity. That is, though a population may grow in size until it is too large for existing resources to sustain it, it must subsequently decline. It makes more sense for this to occur *rationally* than as a consequence of ill-informed decision-making.

As these supplies are drawn down, and our numbers continue to increase while ecological degradation progresses, the number of humans will, of necessity, come down sooner or later despite all these public policy efforts to unlimitedly increase it. Whether we have a hand in voluntarily and humanely making sure the numbers are at a sustainable limit, or simply let nature manage the whole thing for us is up to us. Ecologist Lester Brown recently wrote, “One of the toughest things for people to do is to anticipate sudden change. Typically we project the future by extrapolating from trends in the past. Much of the time this approach works well. But sometimes it fails spectacularly, and people are simply blindsided by events such as today’s economic crisis.”

It is “indispensably” time to understand this. ■