

The Right Way to Love Illegal Immigrants

National Review's Ramesh Ponnuru Instructs Us

BY MARCUS EPSTEIN

The latest issue of *National Review* has an article by Ramesh Ponnuru [“Getting Immigration Right: A headache and a half for the GOP,” October 8, 2007] in which he tries to expose, in his Olympian way, the flawed thinking of both the “comprehensivists”—whom he defines as supporters of a guest worker program, an amnesty with certain preconditions, and increased border security—and the “restrictionists”—whom he defines as supporters of an enforcement-only approach.

(Typical of the Establishment Right, Ponnuru’s belated awakening to what Peter Brimelow back in 1995 called “America’s immigration disaster” does not yet extend to legal immigration. On present form, maybe he’ll get around to that by 2019.)

Ponnuru claims: “I’m not saying that immigration policy should be determined by the needs of the Republican Party.” But clearly the thrust of his article is what policy will better serve the Stupid Party—and, of course, its media groupies, such as himself.

Ponnuru starts off by listing a number of flaws of the “comprehensivists”. He acknowledges that amnesty upsets both conservative Republican voters and swing voters. He now admits that Hispanics are far from “natural Republicans” and that no amount of outreach will make them vote for the GOP, so that increasing the number of Hispanics will inevitably hurt the GOP. He also argues that promoting amnesty will create a backlash that will raise the profile of Tom Tancredo, apparently a bad

thing, and something that will not bring Hispanics into the GOP.

All these points could be reduced to one fact: the “comprehensive” approach has the dual effect of alienating white voters who would otherwise vote Republican, and creating more Hispanic voters who will vote for the Democrats.



National Review's Ramesh Ponnuru

This is actually the relatively less objectionable part of Ponnuru’s piece. But he still gives the “comprehensivists” far too much credit. Virtually every single one of them had at some point supported an amnesty with no strings attached. They only added the preconditions and the increased border secu-

rity, both riddled with loopholes, to make their goal of amnesty a little easier to swallow.

Furthermore, many of these “comprehensive” amnesties have still managed to upset the Latino Lobby for not being expansive enough.

Needless to say, Ponnuru’s criticism is not limited to amnesty supporters. Indeed, Ponnuru claims that “the restrictionists avoid the comprehensivists’ mistakes in favor of new ones all their own.”

Because these “restrictionists” have (he concedes) the momentum in the party, “it is their errors that are proving more consequential now.”

Ponnuru makes five criticisms of the “restrictionists”:

1. Although acknowledging that Bush’s gains among Hispanics have been overstated, Ponnuru says restrictionists don’t give Bush enough credit for increasing the Hispanic vote.
2. Sanctuary policies are necessary because otherwise illegal aliens won’t report crimes or seek

Marcus Epstein is the founder of the Robert A. Taft Club and the executive director of the The American Cause and Team America PAC.

healthcare (presumably paid for by the U.S. government).

3. Tough rhetoric by Newt Gingrich on sanctuary policies will alienate Hispanic voters.

4. This is evidenced in the fact that Arizona GOP Congressman Jeff Flake did better than J.D. Hayworth in the Hispanic vote, and Flake won reelection, and Hayworth lost.

5. Attempts to abolish birthright citizenship are bad because it makes the GOP look like it hates children and it will be thrown out in the courts—albeit wrongly, Ponnuru admits.

These arguments have been parroted by immigration enthusiasts and refuted by VDARE.COM countless times. But to summarize:

1. No one denies that Bush increased his share of the Hispanic vote in 2004. The point is that the increase was within the normal range for the GOP Hispanic share, which fluctuates with its white share but systematically further to the left, and the total was trivial compared to the white vote.

2. Sanctuary policies encourage more illegals to come who will then bring more crime and health problems.

3. There are still 13 times as many white voters as Hispanic voters, who as Ponnuru now admits will vote Democratic anyway.

4. Everyone but the neocons knows that it was the War in Iraq and Republican corruption, not immigration, that caused GOP losses. Flake was relatively sane on Iraq by GOP standards and was one of the few Republicans who opposed most of the corruption and pork. Hayworth was one of the war's strongest cheerleaders and involved with a number of Abramoff scandals. Significantly, in the same election cycle, Arizonans overwhelmingly voted even tougher restrictions on state benefits to illegals.

5. One would also think that the author of a book on the politics of abortion wouldn't see the fact that left wing judges will throw out a bill as sufficient reason to oppose it. Just as with abortion, the solution to the problem of birthright citizenship isn't to give up, but rather to push for better judges, constitutional amendments, and/or restricting the power of the judiciary. His argument that we

mustn't propose any policy that could be perceived as being "anti-children" could be used against welfare reform, SCHIP, or for that matter the DREAM act.

Ponnuru then grandly suggests a middle ground. The "comprehensivists" are to scale back their ambitions, and the "restrictionists" are to scale back their rhetoric, where they will inevitably find their way to whatever immigration policy Ponnuru is promoting at the time.

Right now, it seems like the "comprehensivists" are doing exactly what Ponnuru wants. They are introducing amnesties in piecemeal portions like the DREAM act, and AgJobs. Unfortunately for Ponnuru, and fortunately for the country, the restrictionists aren't being fooled.

The piece ends with Ponnuru's great paradox: "The comprehensivists say Republicans can't alienate Hispanics; the restrictionists say that more immigration will hurt the party. The political problem for Republicans is that they're both probably right."

Bunk. The truth is there is no great dilemma for the GOP. Ponnuru refuses to recognize that there are still more white voters than Hispanic voters in this country. Steve Sailer has crunched the numbers to show that if the GOP could just increase their share of the white vote a couple of points, they could afford to lose the entire Hispanic vote. In fact, they could lose the entire nonwhite vote and still be elected. If and when the Republicans or the Democrats learn to count, then both parties will spend more time competing for the white vote—which will require doing something about the invasion of this country.

Of course, this would be condemned as "identity politics for white people" by Ponnuru and his friend Jonah Goldberg.

If, however, the illegal alien babies get citizenship, the 12–20 million illegal aliens in this country get amnestied, and nothing is done to curb legal and illegal immigration, then eventually Ponnuru's preferred "dilemma" might occur.

This is why Pat Buchanan says in his best-seller, *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America* (contemptibly unre-

viewed by *National Review*), that this is America’s “last chance” to get immigration right.

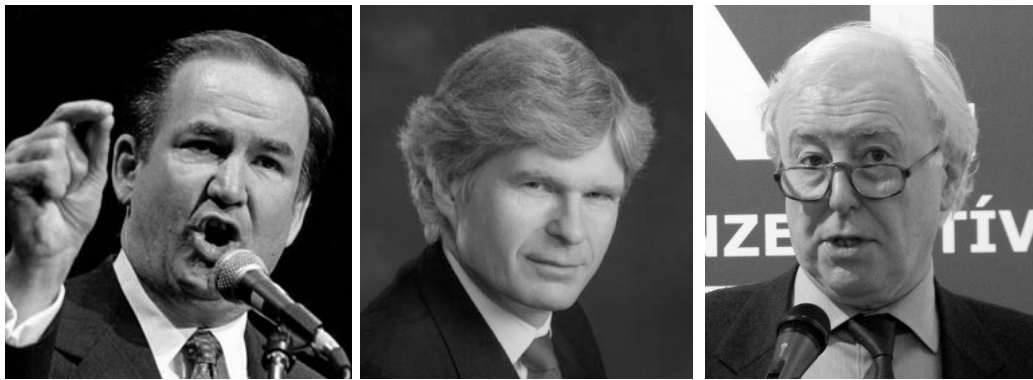
This summer, Ponnuru gave the keynote address at the Center for Immigration Studies’ Eugene Katz luncheon. To his credit, he gave a genuinely insightful speech on media bias for amnesty. But the fact that he was thus honored by the biggest restrictionist think tank unfortunately promotes the dangerous illusion that he is a patriotic immigration reformer merely trying to give some constructive criticism.

In fact, for the at least the last six years, Ponnuru has viciously attacked Pat Buchanan, Peter

moved on from criticizing Buchanan and Brimelow to J.D. Hayworth, Mitt Romney, and Newt Gingrich—three men who have little to no restrictionist credentials. If these men are now too tough on immigration, one can only wonder whom he has in mind as an immigration control statesmen.

Six years ago, Ponnuru scoffed at the “fantasy that [“restrictionists”] could make immigration the central, realigning issue of American politics.” [“Minding the ‘Golden Door’: Toward a Restrictionism that Can Succeed,” *National Review*, April 2, 2001]

But, inexorably, immigration is becoming



Ramesh Ponnuru has criticized Pat Buchanan, Peter Brimelow, and former *National Review* editor John O’Sullivan for their views on immigration.

the central, realigning issue. For example, presidential candidate Congressman Tom Tancredo has promised to campaign against any Republican who supports amnesty. I get calls every day from Democrats telling me how much they like Tancredo and Pat Buchanan. Mike Pence went from con-

servative hero to political pariah solely because of his support for a “middle ground” amnesty. And look what happened to John McCain.

Brimelow, and even *National Review* under the editorship of John O’Sullivan, for their alleged alarmism (not to say “racism”) about immigration, while claiming that he supports their goals. What he appears to want is a “restrictionism” that does not restrict—and does not threaten his social life inside the Beltway.

The “restrictionists” are wiping the floor with the “comprehensivists.” And they are doing it outside of the Republican Party and the Establishment Conservative movement. This is what Ponnuru, like his friend Jonah Goldberg, is frantically trying to prevent.

Ponnuru purports to want both sides to find a “middle ground.” But the truth is that there are not two sides that need to come together. In trying to seek middle ground, while posing as an immigration reform advocate, Ponnuru effectively works to move the debate to the Left. He has opposed deportations, any attempt to select who comes into the country, and now ending birthright citizenship and sanctuary cities. He has even gone as far as suggesting that an amnesty with “triggers” is an acceptable compromise.

Immigration reform patriots don’t just have the momentum within the GOP; they have momentum across the country. So long as they continue to use what Ponnuru sniffs at as “hyperbolic” rhetoric to bypass the Main Stream Media, stick to their principles, and ignore timeservers like Ramesh Ponnuru, they might just save America. ■

Even more troubling is that Ponnuru has now

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http://www.vdare.com/epstein/071001_ponnuru.htm