

Senator Tillis Questions for the Record
Senate Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and
Border Safety
“Hearing: The Essential Role of Immigrant
Workers in America”

Questions for Ronald Vitiello

1. What was the impact you saw as a border patrol officer before and after passage of the 1986 amnesty law?

1.A: Before and during the implementation, there was a lot of activity at the border. We arrested migrants who had documentation, sometimes fake, that they intended to use to apply for amnesty. During implementation we encountered many migrants who fraudulently claimed qualification but later recanted under oath, that they were not eligible. After passage we encountered migrants that had been granted amnesty, and then admitted that they lied to obtain it. I arrested many criminal aliens who were amnesty recipients. Traffickers were also defrauding the system so that they could get status in the US.

We were also told that enforcement was going to improve at the border and in the United States. The enforcement at the border did not significantly change, so the promise of a one-time amnesty in exchange for employer sanctions and a more secure border was never realized.

2. Do you believe that the amnesty law encouraged further illegal immigration?

2.A: Yes, between the fraud and chain migration, as well as the lure of a future redo of amnesty, the border got busier, and we lost faith in the ability or commitment for the government to hold employers to account and credibly secure the border. Now the political and media factions insist we must have

“reform”, but it is my experience that the Democrats want to give another free pass, and speak to a secure border, only if it funds another amnesty. The current administration (Biden) is obviously not going to secure the border and their written and unwritten plans have destroyed control at the line and defunded ICE and hamstrung interior enforcement.

3. Based on your experience leading ICE, can you confirm that visa overstays account for more than half of those in the country illegally?

3.A: I will refer you to the overstay data that DHS reports every year. The estimates that say half are probably correct, but those reports have not been validated by our government. Overstays are a real threat and until operations and congress fully implements verified exit, as called for in the 9/11 Commission report, that threat will continue. Additionally, saying that more than half of the illegal population overstayed their visa is an excuse for some to deny that continuing to resource the border will only cover half the problem. We need to do all we can to tighten the control of visa holders and secure the border. Doing one or the other will only push illegal immigration to the weakest link in the security chain.

4. Do you agree that removing the bars of inadmissibility and expanding the number of waivers would just encourage more individuals to overstay their visas?

4A: Yes, I agree. More benefits without security measures will be risky. We must have an all the above approach on controlling immigration. It must start with a willful commitment to uphold the rule of law, fully securing our border with Mexico. Simultaneously, we must also increase the resources to verify exit for visa holders, arrest those who violate the laws and locate and remove the overstays. End sanctuary cities and deter and prosecute unscrupulous employers who illegally hire illegal aliens. We must also shore up the immigration framework, and ensure illegals are arrested, held for hearings, and removed promptly. End the release of those who claim amnesty, but do not qualify. The remain in Mexico program was a good alternative to detention because it gave Mexico incentives to help control the illegal flow.