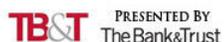


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A border wall won't stop people from coming here illegally

DUDLEY L. POSTON JR. and PETER A. MORRISON Special to The Eagle Mar 19, 2019

Border walls are powerful symbols of exclusion. But they don't work.

Long ago, Gen. George S. Patton Jr. proclaimed: "Fixed fortifications are monuments to man's stupidity. If mountain ranges and oceans can be overcome, anything made by man can be overcome."

History supports him: the Great Wall of China, the Walls of Jericho, Hadrian's Wall, the Maginot Line, Berlin Wall, the Hungarian Border Wall, among many others -- none really worked.

And Trump's Wall won't work.

Let's look at the scientific data that expose Trump's Wall for what it is: medieval image for advancing political ends.

First, physical barriers block only those immigrants attempting to enter the U.S. without papers. Many immigrants enter the U.S. legally with legal passports and visas that permit them to reside in the U.S. anywhere from 30 days to as long as several years. If they stay longer than allowed on their visas, they become illegal and are known as "visa overstayers." Of all the immigrants who entered the U.S. in 2016 who today are classified as illegal, almost 65 percent of them entered the U.S. legally on valid U.S. visas, but overstayed. Most entered legally from Asia, Europe and other continents and entered at major airports in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Houston and elsewhere.

Trump's Wall isn't high enough to keep them out. Walls don't block out people who enter legally, and then overstay their visas.

A wall on the Mexican border won't stop immigrants who enter the U.S. without papers, the stereotypical illegal immigrant group who are known by demographers as EWIs -- immigrants who "enter without inspection." Virtually all of them are seeking a better life beyond what their own countries of birth offer them. Just as a prism separates light into its constituent colors, migration selects distinct types of individuals from wherever they originate.

A wall or any kind of fortification won't stop them from entering. They are highly motivated to better their life in the U.S. They are selected from the most talented. They will overcome the wall one way or another. Remember what Gen. Patton said about the impossibility of building a barrier to stop the entry of persons who really want to enter.

Scientific research by demographers and sociologists corrects several misconceptions about the stereotypical immigrant sneaking across the border without papers. For one, researchers have shown that crime rates are considerably lower among EWIs than among native-born Americans. Immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, are the last persons to engage in crime. By far, legal residents, particularly native-born residents, commit most of the crimes.

Researchers also have shown that EWIs don't suppress local wages, and they don't deprive native-born Americans of jobs they want. EWIs usually take the "three D" jobs -- jobs that are dirty, dangerous and demeaning, the jobs that most local residents don't want.

Demographic researchers also have shown that most EWIs pay taxes. Millions file tax returns every year, ending up paying taxes for benefits they're not permitted to receive. In 2015, the IRS received more than 4 million tax returns from workers who didn't have Social Security numbers, and many of them were EWIs. That year, they paid almost \$24 billion in income taxes. And they won't get any of it back in Social Security and Medicare payments.

Finally, President Donald Trump has stated many times that a wall will "stop much of the drugs from pouring into this country and poisoning our youth." This is an easy argument to dismiss.

A wall won't keep out drugs because most drugs smuggled into the U.S. do not arrive on the backs of those who cross illegally. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration reported in a 2015 assessment that Mexican drug cartels bring virtually all their drugs over the Southern border through ports of entry via trucks, passenger vehicles and tractor trailers.

Our country needs to encourage, not discourage, immigration. Demographers are well-aware of the "selectivity" of immigration. Only the very best people immigrate to the U.S., and this includes the EWIs and the visa overstayers.

It makes absolutely no sense at all to build a wall to try to keep them out.

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