

**“Journalism in a 24/7 World:
Decision-making for the Online Editor”**

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WEB PROJECT BRIEFING PAPER

“IMMIGRATION: ISSUES AND SOURCES

FALL 2006

By Daniel M. Kowalski¹

INTRODUCTION:

It's easy to report on dehydrated or dead immigrants on the Arizona border, corrupt officials, divided families, employers suddenly losing valued workers, and long waits for visas. These are just the symptoms, not the disease.

The more difficult, but more important, task is to describe the system that creates these problems, why it is the way it is, how it got that way, and whether there are any prospects for change.

The task is even more difficult for online reporters and editors because online content relies heavily on snappy visuals and graphics, whereas reporting on the immigration system - the disease causing the symptoms - can be boring, technical and textual.

WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW:

On Oct. 4, 2006 President Bush signed H.R. 5441, the Homeland Security Appropriations Act, which included:

- \$2.27 billion for border patrol, adding 1,500 new Border Patrol agents, for a total of 14,800;
- \$1.2 billion for border fencing, vehicle barriers, technology and infrastructure;

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- \$4.2 billion for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE);
- \$3.1 billion for the Coast Guard's homeland security missions;
- \$1.38 billion for ICE custody operations, adding 6,700 detention beds, for a total of 27,500;
- \$28.2 million to assist state and local efforts to enforce immigration law;
- \$238 million for transportation and removal of undocumented aliens;
- \$600 million for Air and Marine Operations for border and airspace security;
- \$183 million for a total of 75 fugitive operations teams nationwide, an increase of 23;
- \$137 million for the Criminal Alien Program;
- \$44 million for Alternatives to Detention;
- \$362 million for the US-VISIT program; and
- \$135 million to support immigration verification systems.

Predictably, and notably, in his signing ceremony remarks² Bush made no mention whatsoever of Mexico, Mexicans, the Mexican government or economy.

WHAT'S NEXT:

A constellation of issues - most of them listed below - will develop over the coming months. The best stories will be informed by all of them, even if a given story has only one apparent topic.

What follows is a **non-exclusive, unranked** list of the hot issues developing this Fall 2006 in immigration law and policy, together with a **non-exclusive, unranked** list of sources.

ISSUES:

- **State and local involvement** in immigration law enforcement, direct and indirect; INA Sec. 287(g); housing; employment; driver licensing; banking...
- **Employment Verification / Workplace Enforcement**; according to MPI and others this will be the "cornerstone" of any effective immigration reform... **[NOTE: I think this issue, together with the ID issue below, will be THE HOT ISSUE(S) for the next 2-5 years.]**

² <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061004-2.html>

- **Secure IDs**; biometrics, "national ID," Social Security cards; tied to EV/WE issues above; scalability problems; what about the homeless, disabled, poor?...
- **Overstays**; at least 50 percent the "illegal" population entered legally and then overstayed; how to prevent? catch and deport?...
- **Forgotten Borders**; Canada, all three coasts, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands; don't forget Alaska; port security; container ships...
- **Language / "Culture" / Race**; To what extent is the current hubbub driven by fears of "invasion" by Spanish-speakers who "refuse to assimilate" into "American culture?" What are the dynamics of relations between immigrant vs. native African-American, Latino and API populations?
- **Designing Reform**: Who has new/better plans? What do they look like? Who and/or what is holding reform back?
- **The Fence**: Will any of it be built? Paid for? "Virtual" or actual? Reaction from Mexico? Effectiveness? Tribal issues; environmental issues; construction issues...
- **"Security," Crime, Terrorism**: To what extent, if any, are these issues related to immigration law and policy?

SOURCES³:

- **AILA / AILF**: American Immigration Lawyers Association / American Immigration Law Foundation; www.aila.org; www.aifl.org; 918 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004-1400, Phone: 202-216-2400, Fax: 202-783-7853; George Tzamaras, gtzamaras@aila.org; Tim N. Vettel, AILF Public Affairs Manager, 202-742-5600 ext.5608, tvettel@aifl.org.
- **NIF**: National Immigration Forum; www.immigrationforum.org; 50 F Street NW, Suite 300,

³ The listed contacts are the "official" press officers listed by each entity, but your better sources for interviews, quotes, etc., may be other officers or employees within the organization. The press officer should be able to route your inquiry to the appropriate person, but if not, call me; I might have other ideas as to the "right" person for your story.

Washington, DC 20001, Phone: (202) 347-0040, Fax: (202) 347-0058; Douglas Rivlin, rivlin@immigrationforum.org.

- **NLG-NIP**: National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild; www.nationalimmigrationproject.org, 14 Beacon Street, Suite 602, Boston, MA 02108, Phone: 617-227-9727, Fax: 617-227-5495; Ki Kim, 617-227-9727 ext. 6, ki@nationalimmigrationproject.org.
- **MPI**: Migration Policy Institute, www.migrationpolicy.org, 1400 16th St NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036, Tel. 202-266-1940, Fax: 202-266-1900; Colleen Coffey, ccoffey@migrationpolicy.org.
- **CLINIC**: Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., www.cliniclegal.org, 415 Michigan Ave., NE, Suite 150, Washington, DC 20017, Tel: (202) 635-2556, Fax: (202) 635-2649, William Youmans, wyoumans@cliniclegal.org.
- **NILC**: National Immigration Law Center, www.nilc.org, 3435 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2850, Los Angeles, CA 90010, Tel: 213-639-3900, Fax: 213-639-3911, Linton Joaquin, joaquin@nilc.org.
- **ILRC**: Immigrant Legal Resource Center, www.ilrc.org, 1663 Mission Street, Suite 602, San Francisco, CA 94103, Tel: 415-255-9499, Fax: 415-255-9792, Elizabeth Romero, eromero@ilrc.org.
- **TRAC**: Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, www.trac.syr.edu/immigration/, Suite 200, 1718 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, Tel: (202) 518-9000, Fax: (202) 483-1248, Larry Katzman, lkatzman@syr.edu.
- **ACLU-IRP**: American Civil Liberties Union - Immigrants' Rights Project, 125 Broad Street, 18th Floor New York, NY 10004, Tel: 212-549-2660, Fax: 212-549-2654, Lucas Guttentag, immrights@aclu.org.
- **FIRRP / NWIRP / FIAC / PAPA**, etc: There are numerous organizations across the country that provide free or low-cost legal services to immigrants; they also perform outreach and education and often have a media

spokesperson. Among the most noted are the "Florence Project" in Arizona, www.firrp.org, NWIRP in Seattle, www.nwirp.org, FIAC in Florida, www.fiacfla.org, and PAPA in Austin, www.papaustin.org.⁴

- **IMMPROF / Law School Clinics**: There are dozens of law school professors across the country that specialize in immigration law and policy; some lead clinics in which law students are able to represent immigrants in court. They communicate via a members-only listserv, IMMPROF, managed by Hiroshi Motomura, (919) 962-4126, motomura@email.unc.edu, and Margaret Taylor, (336) 758-5435, margaret.taylor@wfu.edu. They also share information with each other and the public via their "ImmigrationProf Blog," <http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/immigration/>.
- **CCIS**: The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, UC San Diego, www.ccis-ucsd.org, La Jolla, California 92093-0548, Tel: (858) 822-4447, Fax: (858) 822-4432, Wayne Cornelius, wcorneli@ucsd.edu.
- **GAO**: The Government Accountability Office often produces interesting reports on immigration: www.gao.gov/docsearch/featured/immigration.html.
- **CRS**: The Congressional Research Service provides memoranda and longer research pieces for members of Congress and their staff. The reports are not released directly to the public, but many are quickly leaked, and efforts are underway to make them all public. Various aggregators have posted collections, such as: www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/#immigration.
- **DOS / DHS (ICE, CIS, CBP) / DOJ (EOIR, OIL)**: The various governmental departments and their components that deal with immigration, visas and border control all have press officers who are very nice people but who are prohibited from telling you anything of value. I rarely call them for comment, although I do try to monitor these websites on a daily basis: www.ice.gov, www.uscis.gov, www.cbp.gov, www.dhs.gov, www.usdoj.gov/eoir/, www.travel.state.gov/news/news_1735.html and www.usdoj.gov/civil/oil/immigration_bulletin.htm. Often

⁴ Full disclosure: I am an ex-officio member of PAPA's Board of Directors.

the most interesting reports come from the agencies' internal watchdogs, their Inspectors General, so I also monitor these sites:
www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0326.xml, and <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/new.htm>.

- **CIS / FAIR**: The main restrictionist groups - the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) - can always be counted on for a quote or a study: www.cis.org, www.fairus.org.
- [NOTE: There are numerous "faith-based" groups (such as the USCCB - U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) and ethnic groups (such as MALDEF - Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund) that have immigration-related roles and spokespersons, but given that immigration is not their exclusive mission, I have not listed them here.]

DANIEL KOWALSKI is Editor-in-Chief of *Bender's Immigration Bulletin* (a LexisNexis publication). He has practiced immigration law for nearly 20 years, working in both small and large firms, as well as in solo practice, in Denver, Seattle and Austin. Kowalski is a member of the Border Security Issues Committee of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and head of the Biometrics Subcommittee. He was named a Border Justice and Journalism Fellow in 2003 and participated in the opening November 2003 conference co-sponsored by USC Annenberg's Institute for Justice and Journalism and the Western Knight Center for Specialized Journalism, also based at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. Born in Denver, Kowalski lived in Arizona, New York and Texas throughout school.