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Immigration Issues

One of the immigrants who came through Ellis Island was my grandfather. He came here in 1923, and I can still see his name on the original roster on the internet. Through a long and contorted saga, my grandfather was driven into the Arabian desert, left for dead, became a slave of a wheat merchant in North Africa for four years, escaped to Marseilles, France where he worked on the docks as a longshoreman, purchased steerage fare on a ship named Majestic, and finally made it here with five dollars in his pocket.

My grandfather came here legally, learned to speak English, and became a lawful taxpayer. When he arrived in 1923, the name on the ship manifest was Minas Altoonian-his Armenian name. Shortly after he arrived, he changed to a more American name -Mike Gosh. Most of the Altoonian family was massacred by the Muslim Turks. Mike found his mother and new stepfather here in America with the last name Goshkarian. When he decided to shorten his name, it was about more than simplicity. It was a statement about wanting to participate in our country. To this day many legal immigrants Americanize their names because they desire to both simplify the pronunciation and assimilate into American culture.

Mike located some of his family members in Racine, Wisconsin, moved to Chicago to work for the Yellow Cab Company, then moved to Detroit to work for the Ford Motor Company, and worked there until he retired. He then bought a gasoline service station and operated it until he retired again at the age of 70. After that, he worked for a housing construction company until he retired for the final time at the age of 80. In short, he contributed to the community and lived by our civic rules.



My grandfather, Mike Gosh, with my dad in 1945 (22 years after coming to the United States).

We all love to hear a great rags-to-riches story. As Americans, we love the diverse cuisine, cultural customs, holidays and vocabulary. We accept immigrants' hard work ethic, tax-paying participation and cultural gifts as enhancements to our rich fabric of American life.

However, the stories today are very different from 1923 because illegal immigration has become so prevalent and many don't seem to want to become part of the American culture. Assimilation doesn't mean you give up your favorite foods or your language. It just means that you enlarge yourself to be part of what is already happening on our soil. Those who enter legally have a natural loyalty, respect and gratitude for our country. Those who sneak in under

City of St. Charles

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Missouri State Constitution
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the dark cloud of illegality are prevented from openly participating in our history, language and customs. They are condemned to remain perpetually on the bottom rung of the economic and social ladder.

Those who enter illegally are also showing a blatant disregard for our rules. Perhaps our rules need to be revised, but until they are, we cannot allow people to break them. Recent attempts by the U.S. Congress to revise immigration rules have failed because of the lack of agreement on how to address the problem. Some want to turn the entire process into a “free-for-all.” Others want to simply enlarge immigration quotas. While Congress is arguing, illegal immigrants continue to cross our borders. Those crossing the border illegally receive no scrutiny whatsoever for such concerns as physical and mental health or criminal background.

A timeless principle is that you get more of what you reward. As long as people find jobs and a standard of living that is superior to what they had back home, they will continue to come to America. For our part, we embrace immigrants as long as they abide by the rules.

However, the federal government has let us down by failing to understand its proper role to protect our borders. Occasionally, a constituent will write me about a problem that is under the jurisdiction of the federal, county or local government. I try to help my constituents by informing them of what powers are granted to a state representative and what belong elsewhere.

Our federal officials seem confused about what powers belong to them. If our federal government cannot enforce their own immigration rules, it will fall to the states to do whatever is within our power. The level of inaction at the federal level calls for a response from us on the state and local levels.

Now I have some good news. After studying the laws that can be passed by the states, I am confident that we can find ways to strengthen our state regardless of the inaction of Congress. Below, I’ve listed legislation, of which I have been on the front line as a sponsor or signed on as a co-sponsor, that would alleviate some of the problems of illegal immigration.

Sponsored legislation:

HB 1317: Requires election authorities to verify United States citizenship of all voter registration applicants.

HB 1757: Requires any employer convicted of hiring illegal aliens to repay double the value of any state-administered or subsidized tax credit, tax abatement, or loan.

Co-sponsored Legislation:

HB 1626: Prohibits certain illegal aliens from receiving public assistance benefits.

HB 1654: Requires certain detained juveniles to be reported to the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement if there is probable cause to believe that they are illegal aliens.

HB 1655: Requires applicants for public benefits to prove citizenship, permanent residence, or lawful presence to be eligible for benefits.

HB 2151: Establishes the Missouri Immigration Act. In its main provisions, this bill:

- (1) Creates the crime of being a noncitizen illegally present in Missouri, a class D felony;
- (2) Authorizes the Attorney General to enter into cooperative agreements with other states for the transportation of il border and authorizes multijurisdictional enforcement groups in Missouri to train volunteers to do the transporting.

HB 2320: Prohibits the employment of an illegal alien in Missouri.

As you can see, the rules to control illegal immigration here in Missouri can be strengthened in many ways, regardless of what the federal government is not accomplishing. While many of these bills have not yet passed into law, I have a plethora of ideas on what needs to happen next session. My stalwart commitment is to protect our state by passing laws that will give us the satisfaction of tackling a problem as well as trust in our newest neighbors. While some legislators are afraid to pass laws that tighten up our rules, I think this is the kindest way to help those who are in this country legally. Many of my constituents who are here from other countries feel that this shows respect to them as legal immigrants.

STATES IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL									
Arriving at Port of _____ 19__									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Above, this scanned copy of the actual passenger roster from Ellis Island shows the day my grandfather arrived in America. While this may be too small to be readable, you can look up your own documents by clicking here: www.ellisland.org

Your thoughts are important to me, so please let me know what you think about immigration issues. You can send me your opinion by clicking here: [Cynthia Davis](#).



Representative Cynthia Davis welcomes a new business to O'Fallon at the ribbon cutting for O'Reilly's Auto Parts, located on South Main Street. (Notice that we all showed up wearing colors that match the store!)

A Little Bit of Humor...

"President Bush is proposing sending six thousand National Guard troops to bolster patrols along the U.S.-Mexican border. Or as he's calling it, "No Juan Left Behind." --Jay Leno

This Capitol Report is a weekly newsletter by Representative Cynthia Davis, from the 19th District, covering events in the Missouri Legislature and district-wide issues.

- ☺ If you know of anyone else who would like to receive my Capitol Report, please send an e-mail to Cynthia.Davis@house.mo.gov with the person's name and e-mail address. We'll add them to the list.
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