



Red Card biometrics touted for immigration reform

by Anita Crane

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President Barack Obama invited a small group of Senate and House members to the White House for a June 25 meeting on comprehensive immigration reform. Among other things, he announced that Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano will work with lawmakers and that the government will target employers who hire undocumented workers.

For years, Helen Kriebler, president of the Vernon K. Kriebler Foundation in Denver, has been trying to help business owners as well as temporary migrant workers, and so she developed the Red Card Solution. After all, she owns the Colorado Horse Park, an international equestrian center in Parker, Colo., which depends on the labor of migrant workers. Yet she has never been invited to meet with President Obama.

Still, on June 23-24, Kriebler conducted Red Card seminars in Washington for lawmakers and everyone who would listen.

Currently, U.S. law dictates that only 33,000 H-2B visas are granted to seasonal guest workers per each half of the fiscal year, but Kriebler said that's too few workers for the demands of small business owners across America.

She said, "We have criminalized hard-working people, not to mention the business owners who are made to choose between hiring illegal workers, or going out of business without them."

"In even the toughest economic times," Kriebler explained, "American workers reject certain jobs." These jobs literally mean putting food on the table via livestock care, farming, and grocery and restaurant labor – to name just a few occupations. Kriebler said, "The labor shortages cause businesses to close, worsening the economic recession."

Therefore, the Red Card is an assignment ID pass that border officials can swipe to legally admit temp migrant workers. A microchip in the card would allow U.S. law enforcement officials to verify a foreigner's work assignment status in moments.

The Red Card is also designed to include the biometric data of a migrant worker's fingerprints and a retina scan for the purpose of eliminating identity fraud and the entry of criminals. (Apparently Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.)

adopted a bit of Kriebel's idea because, on June 24, he announced plans to write an immigration bill requiring that illegal workers report to the government and become documented by surrendering their biometric data.)

All things considered, the biometric data concept might elicit an outcry from those who object to Big Brother government.

Nevertheless, the Red Card requires no new government agencies. "The Red Card Solution is underwritten when employers pay to list jobs with the private employment services opening offices in foreign countries," said Kriebel. "That means that business, not taxpayers, will foot the bill."

She also said Americans shouldn't assume that migrant workers want to become permanent residents or citizens. Kriebel's own experience is backed up by a 2005 Pew Hispanic Center survey of 5,000 Mexican migrants showing that 71% (a 4-to-1 margin) would "participate in a program that would allow them to work in the United States and cross the border legally on the condition that they eventually return to Mexico."

Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.), who has worked to reform the migrant worker system, endorses the Red Card Solution in a DVD that was released by Kriebel on June 23, but he wasn't invited to the White House immigration meeting.

In the documentary, Rev. Luis Cortés of Esperanza USA also endorses the Red Card Solution. Cortés has urged Obama to reform immigration law by Thanksgiving Day 2009, and the White House has confirmed plans to do so by year's end. Furthermore, Cortés has repeatedly urged the U.S. government to cease law enforcement "raids" on immigrants, and so his Red Card endorsement is significant.

At Kriebel's press conference, a panel of immigration reform and economic growth advocates endorsed her plan too.

Mario Lopez of Hispanic Leadership Fund feared that the Obama Administration would produce a cumbersome bill with "big union payoffs."

Considering hard-working Hispanics, Lopez said, "Today there is no opportunity for these workers to come in legally. So people who just want to provide for their families make the difficult decision to break our law, go through great personal danger, then exist in the shadows."

Like Cortés, Lopez considers the Red Card as the best proposal for everyone from temporary migrant workers to American business owners to U.S. security officials to the Hispanic American political base.

Matt Kibbe of Freedom Works added, "One of the reasons we liked it is because it's a politically innovative idea."

That idea, he said, is an opportunity to overcome political caricatures and build broad coalitions.

James Carafano of the Heritage Foundation said that the U.S. has an obligation to control its borders and enforce the law, but he stressed that when employers get the workers they need, it creates more jobs and grows the economy.

Steve Moore, an economist who writes for the Wall Street Journal, said, “It really is interesting that a small business owner came up with this idea.” Moore has worked on immigration for 25 years and said that if more members of Congress were business owners instead of lawyers, we’d be much further along on this issue.

None of the Red Card endorsers suggested that it can entirely correct the problem of undocumented workers and illegal aliens in the U.S., but all agreed that it would be part of the solution.

The Red Card Solution video is online at <http://www.mefedia.com/entry/the-red-card-solution-full-documentary/19908531> and more information is available at TempsInUSA.com.

It remains to be seen whether Helen Kriebel will be invited to the White House before some mammoth immigration bill is pushed through Congress and signed by the president.

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