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My immigration agenda

I'm not idly waiting until Washington addresses the issue

ELIZABETH DOLE

From U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C.:

In response to your June 9 editorial, "Enough one-sided immigration rhetoric," I welcome a discussion of my position on illegal immigration. Simply put, securing our borders and enforcing our laws must happen before we consider any broad immigration reforms.

Last summer's immigration bill failed, largely because it provided amnesty to 12 million to 20 million illegal immigrants. Amnesty tied to promises of border security was attempted in 1986, and since then, the illegal population has quadrupled.

I have refused to idly wait for Washington to address the urgent matters at hand, especially for North Carolina, where the number of illegal immigrants has been growing faster than in most other states, due in part to lax state laws. Consider this – in 2006 illegal immigrants cost North Carolina taxpayers \$997 million!

After meeting with N.C. sheriffs who told me of their difficulties with illegal aliens who were committing crimes, I initiated the establishment of a statewide immigration enforcement plan for North Carolina – the first of its kind in the nation. Through partnerships with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, N.C. sheriffs now have access to training and resources – paid for by the federal government – that enable them to determine the identity and legal status of arrested individuals. Under this plan, criminal illegal aliens are identified, apprehended and deported.

There is much more work that I am doing on this important issue. I have helped secure billions of dollars for border security, supported better workplace verification and worked to improve temporary worker programs for the N.C. industries that rely on this labor to fill jobs not taken by Americans.

For example, I've met with constituents representing dozens of businesses, many of which are in dire situations due to their inability to obtain returning H-2B guest workers. I have cosponsored legislation to address this problem.

I also continue working with the Labor Department to help fix problems with the broken H-2A system that serves the agriculture community. Our guest worker program can address our economic needs in a legal way if we're serious about addressing these challenges.

Immigration is an issue that impacts nearly every facet of our society. North Carolinians can be assured that I will continue to push for responsible solutions.



MCT

Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., chairwoman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, right, listens as Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, during a luncheon and discussion regarding the upcoming November elections at the National Press Club in Washington Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2006. (CHUCK KENNEDY/MCT)