

Illegal Security

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Entitlements: The Senate immigration reform bill gives illegal workers a right to Social Security benefits. But why should they have rights American citizens don't?

Most Americans mistakenly think they're entitled to their Social Security benefits, a misunderstanding the government perpetuates by calling Social Security and Medicare "entitlements." But they are nothing of the sort.

As we've noted time and again, no matter how much money you pay into these programs, you are "enti-tled" to nothing at all. This is a matter of legal fact, settled in 1960 by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Nestor v. Flemming*.

Yet, last week the Senate defeated by a 50-49 vote the so-called Ensign amendment to the immigration reform bill. It would have prohibited those who come here illegally and work with forged or phony papers from receiving Social Security benefits.

In effect, the Senate's action makes illegal immigrants a privileged class under law. And down the road, that largesse will prove costly.

Their advocates note how illegals now pay \$7 billion more a year into Social Security than they receive -- in effect, a subsidy. This is true. But it's also true that they are here illegally, and that Social Security was never meant for noncitizens.

And once the current wave of some 12 million illegals begins to age -- a recent report claims 10% of Mexico's population is now in the U.S., with millions more on the way -- the subsidy tide will turn, creating huge new costs.

As the Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector recently estimated, the welfare cost of illegals could total as much as \$50 billion a year.

None of this, of course, would matter if Congress would just create private accounts for Social Security. The immigrant issue, more than any, shows why they are such a great idea. They'd belong to worker con-tributing. So an illegal who accumulated money in that account would keep it, since he owns it. Problem solved.

Instead, current legal workers in the U.S., who already get a rotten deal from Social Security, will be asked to foot the bill for millions of retiring illegals. It's bad

enough that today's workers pay punitively high taxes to foot the bill for the long-living, early-retiring baby-boomers. But illegals too?

All this should have young workers up in arms. The average 25-year-old entering the work force today already will see a negative average annual return of -0.82% from Social Security, thanks to the higher taxes needed to support retiring boomers.

Now, it will only get worse. As it stands, Congress' immigration "reform" will lure millions of new illegals. And who can blame them, especially if they're granted amnesty and all the benefits they can apply for once they're here?