

The Impact of Illegal Immigration on My Family

First I want to thank you distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen for allowing me to share my testimony with you. I am not here personally for sympathy, but may offer a couple of solutions to the Elected Officials from my perspective, a man that for 2 years has intensely studied the problems and consequences of lax and opposing Immigration Laws.

Two years ago this week, my 16-year old daughter, Tessa, and her best friend, Ali, were killed as they were sitting at an intersection waiting for a red light to change. They both had their seatbelts on and were doing nothing wrong.

They were wonderful girls with bright futures.

But their lives ended suddenly and unnecessarily when a drunken illegal immigrant hit them at more than 70 miles an hour. Alfredo Ramos, whose blood alcohol level was almost three times the legal limit, didn't see the girls' car or the red light and couldn't because of his intoxication. The crash killed Tessa and Ali instantly. Alfredo Ramos walked away unhurt.

At first, my focus was on mourning my daughter and her friend. Our community, friends and family stood with us, honoring their memories.

But anger and a feeling of betrayal took over when I discovered at the trial that Alfredo Ramos could have been -- should have been -- deported long before he ran that light. In fact, this accident wasn't the first time that Alfredo Ramos walked away from a drunken incident. It wasn't even the second time.

Alfredo Ramos had been arrested twice before -- for driving under the influence (DUI) and public intoxication. He had a fake driver's license from Florida and could not speak English.

But because of Sanctuary policies in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake, Virginia, nobody -- not the judge in a prior DUI case or the police who arrested him in the prior incidents -- questioned him about his immigration status. Instead of being deported to his home country, he stayed on the streets of Virginia Beach to drink, drive, and take two innocent lives in a way that displayed a wonton disrespect for the laws of our land.

He seemed invisible to the system. I'm not sure if your American kids or relatives would have had the same opportunity to fail. They probably would have been incarcerated, legitimate license suspended, insurance payments would go through the roof, and they would have had to pay large attorney's fees. Ramos pays nothing, has no driver's training, no insurance, no lawyer, no license, and now the American People have to spend approximately \$30,000/ year for 40 years (\$1,200,000) to rehabilitate - then deport him. The Taxpayers have to pay for it!

The deaths garnered local and national media attention: *The Virginia Pilot*, *The Washington Post*, *The American Chronicle*, MSNBC, CNN, Fox News, and many others wrote and talked about Tessa and Ali. Their stories shed light on the tragic consequences of lax immigration policies.

Gladly, some important things have changed in Virginia Beach and Chesapeake in the last two years. Virginia Beach now requires that police check the immigration status of all arrested. Virginia Beach and Chesapeake passed measures requiring that companies doing business with the cities pledge not to hire illegal immigrants. Last July, a statewide law took effect which requires local jails to contact federal authorities to check the immigration status of all foreign-born inmates, irrespective of whether they are in the country legally. And, local police officers are working more closely with federal authorities than ever before.

But a threat remains!

Despite recommendations from the state's Attorney General and the Virginia State Crime Commission, Virginia's Governor has yet to ask federal authorities for a 287 (g) agreement; and ICE may not have the resources to support such a request. The 287(g) program would allow the state to enter into an agreement with the federal government so that state law enforcement officers can assist in the investigation, apprehension and detention of illegal immigrants. Opponents of 287(g) cite a supposed "chilling effect" on cooperation between immigrant communities and police, the cost of the program, or the potential for racial profiling as reasons to reject it.

As I testify here today, I expect to hear many of these arguments.

While I sympathize with those arguments, I am not compelled. I know about chilling experiences. They happen on the average of twice a month with Illegal Immigrants in America, transparent criminals in a broken system that lets them kill or injure honest citizens.

A family should not have to mourn the death of a loved one just because of an unrelated policy or the political correctness of not offending or inconveniencing a few people. This prevents us from making our communities safer, a Constitutional right to all citizens of the United States.

Newsweek columnist Robert J. Samuelson recently wrote:

"We face a choice between a society where people accept modest sacrifices for a common good or a more contentious society where a group selfishly protect their own benefit."

I believe this to be true.

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