

"Since the U.S. government doesn't seem to be serious about closing our borders, I have been looking for examples from other places which we might be able to use. While the Department of Justice is busy filing lawsuits against U.S. states struggling to curb illegal immigration instead of enforcing U.S. immigration law, I think I have found another country which has the right idea.

First, in this "mystery" country, local police are authorized - actually, they are required - to check the immigration documents of people suspected of being in the country illegally. After demanding to see a visa, the agents are supposed to convey migrants to immigration authorities. That makes sense - it's exactly what the State of Arizona is trying to do.

Until just recently, the "mystery" country from my research had pretty harsh penalties for illegal immigration, up to six years in prison. No "catch-and-release" policy there. Now, the penalties have been scaled back to a fine and deportation, which the "mystery" country operates fairly efficiently, loading buses with illegal immigrants and shipping them back home.

For citizens who shelter and transport illegal immigrants or help them evade the "mystery" country's laws for profit, the penalties are even more extreme - from six to 12 years in prison and up to \$46,000 in fines. Not surprisingly, illegal immigrants don't get very much help from the locals after they've crashed the borders.

The "mystery" country has a pretty good immigration law that I think we could borrow from in an effort to strengthen our own policies. What country has such a firm grasp on tough enforcement of such a difficult problem? Why, it's our neighbor to the South - it's Mexico.

Why Mexico's immigration policies are so right and ours are so wrong is anyone's guess, but the lesson is clear: our policies aren't tough enough, and they aren't being enforced. The legal immigration process is a great part of what makes our nation prosperous and free. But it is being overwhelmed by a new legacy for our country, lawless immigration to the United States and de facto - if illegal - residence here.

This policy is dangerous, and it is expensive. Lax enforcement of U.S. immigration laws is leading states to try to find their own solutions. Arizona is one such state trying to stop \$2.6 billion from being spent on the illegal immigration problem each year. Instead, they would use those resources to focus on government services and infrastructure improvements for taxpaying citizens.

In Missouri, we could do the same with the \$338 million per year we spend on services for illegal immigrants and enforcement of the law against them. If only we addressed this problem, federally and at the border, with strict standards, we could easily address the problem. We could borrow some of those ideas: swift deportation, tough penalties on trafficking of illegal immigrants, workplace enforcement of immigration laws, and a coordinated local, state and federal response.

If only our immigration policy were more like Mexico's."

