

IMMIGRATION IN BORDER STATES?

Arizona's new immigration law makes it a crime for illegal immigrants to be in the state — for any reason — but it also prohibits police from using racial profiling. It also gives county attorneys authority to investigate employers and establishes crimes involving trespassing by illegal aliens, stopping to hire or soliciting work, and transporting, harboring or concealing unlawful aliens.

Arizona's Legislature says this law does not allow police to stop people based solely on the personal suspicion that they are in the country illegally. It would be enforced only after stopping someone for other violations e.g. seat belt laws.

Arizona's Governor requires that police be trained to avoid using race as a factor as they carry out the new law and that a new training course on enforcement of the new law be implemented.

Dozens of US cities already have police help enforce immigration laws via a partnership with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This program, called 287, requires officers go through training on how to avoid racial profiling.

Proponents of the new law say -

- that something needs to be done about the out-of-control USA/Mexico border situation right now in Mexico where drug gangs are seeking to expand their delivery of illegal drugs to this country;
- these individuals require a great many services e.g. medical needs, schools.

Opponents of the new law say - -

- these individuals should not be detained by police based on racial profiling;
- each state creating their own immigration laws would create a confusing patchwork of conflicting rules;

Both sides agree that Washington MUST address the illegal immigration and that a "national answer" is needed before it gets further out of hand.

- **What are your thoughts on Arizona's new law?**

70 percent - Support the Arizona law; something has to be done to address the situation.

18 percent - Oppose this law; it's a state government run witch-hunt.

12 percent – Other

- It's a step in the right direction. But the federal government should govern this, not the states.

- Modify the law to put fears to rest. I've traveled to other countries where you have to prove who you are, it not a good feeling especially when it's perceived to be done random.
- I don't like the burden on business. I support states right to govern them.
- Apply some sanity to our policy-making
- Create a federal law similar to that in Arizona and then require state and local police to enforce the law uniformly across all states.
- Rewrite governing federal statutes governing immigration
- I'm undecided. On one hand, illegals should not be in the country. On the other hand, police should not be using their time to enforce this law, given all of their other public safety duties.

Comments

- Arizona has taken a good first step, but should go further. There is a reason they are called 'illegal aliens'!!
- The Nation needs to address the immigration situation somehow, why not on a State by State basis? If other states find a dramatic increase in illegal arrivals then maybe they will adopt similar laws.
- Every state, including Florida, that fails to pursue law enforcement against illegal immigrants, fails its citizens, just as the federal government has failed the nation on this responsibility.
- ARIZONA LAW IS NO DIFFERENT THAN THE FEDERAL LAW. IF ANYTHING IT PROTECTS CITIZENS RIGHTS.
- Obviously this is a sticky situation. Anytime race is involved it is going to be. However, the cost to Americans to harbor illegal aliens who can pick up an unemployment check or welfare and not be responsible for DUI etc is astronomical and unfair.
- The word "immigrant" presumes their intent to remain here. They are invaders, not immigrants. Invaders are not provided the same protections under the Geneva Accords as immigrants (who are allowed legal entry).
- The cost of providing social services at the expense of taxpayers for illegal individuals likely outweighs the cost for additional enforcement
- Arizona is enforcing the law, something the Federal Government refuses to do.
- Arizona is a boarder state, so it has more of a need to utilize such measures. If the law is enforced as proposed, it is fair, although, abuse could easily happen. Just have to hope enforcement is by the book. This whole issue is a result of the federal government not doing its job to protect the country's borders.
- We must support State rights, and we must STOP giving away our country to illegal aliens, they must be returned to their country of origin and come into this country the legal was , perhaps building a "Ellis Island " type of facility in Arizona and Texas allowing immigrants to enter our country and be documented. Issued ID, criminal background check, speak English, must b employed and in two years if not guilty of crime and have help a job and can pass an English test on our government. Can get citizenship. All other immigrants from other countries have to follow rules why not Mexicans.
- This law should be federal, no local
- States cannot preempt federal law and the military (National Guard) cannot enforce civilian law - it has to be the feds!
- Anytime business is lost because of human relations issue, it is pitiful. Immigration is a Federal issue and the Congress must bring a backbone to the rescue. A problem that has

existed for years because of need for cheap labor and poor economic conditions in the South of the Border.

- If they're here legally, there shouldn't be any problem if they do get pulled over for an infraction.
- I'm not sure this is our most pressing issue. Legislators need to spend their time figuring out how to transform our economy from one of tourism to one where businesses are inclined to come here and figure out a means other than property taxes to fund our schools and services.
- I do not support the Arizona law. I believe it is too harsh given the immigration realities in that area. Furthermore, I do not support the right of each state to draw their own immigration law - this is a federal issue.
- Any chamber members volunteering to pick vegetables, fruits and ferns? Make beds and clean toilets in hotels? Watch the children of the rich while Mommy and Daddy "work"?
- We need to stop pot, guns, other drugs, along with all the BAD GUYS moving the crap, or make it so everyone can smoke pot legally.

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSIONS?

From 2001 to 2008, the average West Palm Beach firefighter's pension rose from \$42,000 to \$73,000. The city's policy to its former workers comes with a cost to taxpayers. At the same time, WPB had to increase its annual contribution to police and firefighter pension plans from \$3 million to more than \$8 million.

Some say such increases are unsustainable and that local government should consider reforming the city's pension system in order to avoid a financial crisis.

Governments often pay less in employee salaries and have usually been able to compensate by offering their workers pension benefits.

Over time, the number of workers has grown and some unions have negotiated generous pension packages, thus costs have risen. Local officials elsewhere in Florida have begun examining their pension plans looking to get costs under control.

Some see it as an important aspect of ensuring the city's continued financial health and avoiding budget deficits in the future.

Many public sector employees receive a defined benefit retirement plan, which promises a specific monthly payment to the retiree based on the employee's earnings history, length of service and age. Each year, the municipality contributes to the investment pool that sustains the promised level of benefits. When the stock market fails to produce the needed returns — taxpayers have to contribute more money to ensure the retirees will get what they've been promised.

About 10 plus years ago, many local governments added new pension benefit formulas in order to better compete for employee talent and to satisfy public employee unions.

Some local administrators are now recommending to **retain their defined benefit plans for existing employees but –**

- freeze them at current levels, so that workers' future raises and years of service wouldn't increase their city's pension obligations;
- Modify their current defined benefit plans i.e. pensions be based on a worker's base earnings, excluding bonus pay and unlimited overtime from the pension calculation.

Others say that the formula factor that determines the size of the pension received - should return to 1990s levels and that employees serve longer before they can retire; and that 401(k)-style defined contribution plan be offered as an option for employees.

Some legislators want to reform local government employee pensions by providing incentives for local governments to move to defined contribution plans and give them more flexibility in their negotiations with employee unions to work out more affordable benefits.

Other ideas include changes to pension calculations....redefining “compensation” and “average final compensation” *to exclude overtime, accumulated annual leave and other forms of pay currently used in pension calculations*. Opponents to this idea claim such legislation would unfairly require employees to work for a longer period of time to get a smaller pension.

- **Do you think local governments should explore the idea of public pension reform?**

Yes 93 percent

No 7 percent

Comments –

- Unions are a large reason as to why our country is having such an economic hardship. Unions had a time and they served their purpose, but government run unions basically hold the public and their tax dollars hostage.
- Substitute "must" for "should"; unsustainable as is
- I think they are overpaid to begin with.
- Committed benefits already earned should not change. However, more attention and training is needed for the politicians called upon to vote on any changes so they have at least a marginal comprehension of both the up and down sides of their decision.
- Local governments should be run like private business and discontinue its practice of lucrative benefits that eventually fall to the taxpayer to compensate any losses
- The situation is completely out of hand. Public employees are civil servants, but now the tail seems to be wagging the dog.
- Private sector has gotten rid of defined benefit plans "pensions". As a general accounting rule you would always want to record the expense when it is occurred. We should just pay more in salary and get rid of the hidden pension cost. Do so by grandfathering existing people into the system and starting new employees on a different plan. You would also offer existing employees the option to go on the new plan if they wanted higher immediate wages. It would require governments to live within their means.
- Cities need to get this under control. If the unions believe that the current "no risk" investment funds are a good idea. They should volunteer to pay any investment short-falls, not the municipalities.
- This is long overdue. Hopefully, the elected officials will have the guts to take on the unions.
- Our current status is outrageous and cannot be sustained. Government workers now are the highest paid in our county with huge retirement packages, why should they have a golden parachute on the tax payers, they should be made to pay into a plan just like the rest of us.
- I suspect tax payers would benefit if all government employees participated in the state pension system. This would bring consistency to all local governments and would take the pension issue out of the collective bargaining process.
- It could be negotiated
- From a date certain forward; don't penalize existing contracts but impact future contracts
- As an ex union president, many contracts are just not sustainable. A dialogue between groups is now mandatory. If no resolution. Dictate by mediator.

- Not only should existing defined benefit plans be frozen, they should be replaced with defined contribution plans, so that the obligation of the local government is limited to the year in which the compensation was earned.
 - Employees should receive their pension based on their current earnings. If they wish to receive higher pensions, it would be their own decision in how long they will work.
 - Get the unions out of the picture. Base their pensions on salaries earned. Limit the pensions and let the employee contribute if they want larger pensions. Take the overtime, accumulated leave, etc. Out of it. Everyone does not get that.
 - Most companies don't even offer these types of plans any longer. Governments need to look at all areas of costs, including benefits just like other businesses.
 - Public pension costs are getting out of control. Less than 1 in 5 workers in the private sector is entitled to a corporate pension
 - They should be more modest
 - Yes we need to make a lot of changes
- **Do support or oppose redefining “compensation” and “average final compensation” in pension calculations to exclude overtime, accumulated annual leave and other forms of pay currently used in pension calculations?**

Yes 86 percent

No 14 percent

Comments

- Support
- The internal reality is that the popular employee gets a final "posting" in a "cherry" position so their "final" compensation is elevated, thereby resulting in larger annual payouts. A better issue to focus on is "lifetime earning" or "career earning".
- Overtime and accumulated leave should not be considered to allow increases to pension benefits
- How can you give a yes or no answer when you ask a "do you support or oppose" question?
- Yes. The employees, like firefighters, regularly work together to abuse the system to max out overtime, etc. For the retiring member.
- Yes-no choice unclear.
- For some classes of employees, overtime is regularly scheduled weekly and is part of their expected salaries.
- Base salary with time only
- Though, I really believe the defined benefit plans should be frozen, so this becomes a mute point.
- Most public service employees are underpaid in the first place. They need the overtime pay to support their families. It was their decision to put in extra hours during their careers and they should be compensated in retirement.
- This is obvious - including overtime, accumulated pay, etc. Is simply padding.
- I believe we should redefine compensation. Do our soldiers get overtime?

- **Would you support local governments retaining their defined benefit plans for existing employee but freezing them at current levels, so that workers' future raises and years of service wouldn't increase their pension obligations?**

Yes 58 percent

No 42 percent

Comments

- Future years of service cannot be ignored in a defined benefit pension arrangement.
- At some point the entire benefit plan needs to be reconsidered to stop the excess given to govt employees
- Government workers generally are paid less for a better future benefit package to include a retirement stream to support current life conditions at retirement.
- Local government employees should not be penalized more than state government employees.
- A graduated scale must be imposed. a promise to employees must be respected within reason
- I support freezing them and in fact I would support converting them to Defined Contribution plans, but I am not sure that would be possible. So instead, freeze them.
- Because thanks to the unions, they usually make more than everyone else does now.
- I think keeping benefits in place for current employees who have made plans based on their current benefits is the right thing to do but definitely changes need to be made for the future.
- The entire benefit package needs to be re-evaluated and grandfather provisions should be designed after the evaluation of current versus proposed changes
- Lower all public pensions
- Would prefer a 401K type program whereby the benefit is based on the employee contribution plus similar contribution from the government entity. Even government employees should be responsible for their own future.
- Do our soldiers at war get less of a plan or better plan than our existing employees? A police or fire fighter should not get paid any more than a MP or firefighter on a naval ship. Those people in our military should get paid more

Overall Comments

- Public employees should be compensated based on market considerations, not union politics. Accordingly, governments should only have necessary employees who are only compensated based on the least amount required to obtain and maintain a qualified individual. If a public employee wants compensation in excess of that amount, they should pursue work in the private sector and contribute to the GDP like the rest of us.
- Defined benefit pensions are required by the FL legislature to remain fully funded. Market go down, contribution go up. However, Market go up, contribution go down. It really is a two way street. Using a short term view that focuses on an extended period of Market go up in comparison with a relatively short period of Market go down is disingenuous.
- A radical change needs to occur in this country to stop the wasteful spending, special interest projects, and huge payoff and benefit packages by all governments. Continual taxing of the wealthy and distribution to those who do not want to work because the

govt provides everything is not the solution. The past 2 years, this country has become more socialistic.

- It's time for government employees to take more responsibility for their retirement savings - the public pension system has gotten out of control - much in the same way that guaranteed pension benefits helped bring down GM and other companies. New employees to public service need to be presented with a trimmed down set of retirement options.
- Yes we need to re think what we pay and to whom.