

Granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants sends the wrong message: Guest opinion



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By Kim Thatcher

If [Senate Bill 833](#) becomes law, Oregon will join a few other states in granting driver's licenses to people not legally in our country. Debate on this bill, which [passed the state Senate on Tuesday and now moves to the House](#), is understandably emotional and personal for those seeking the licenses. The same applies to folks who've witnessed what happens when driving privileges are extended to the wrong people.

Case in point: Craig and Judy Cox from Newberg. In 1980 the couple and others were in a car hit by a drunken driver in the country illegally. Craig's bookkeeper was killed; Judy was hospitalized and left with seizures for life.



Fast-forward 27 years: Another illegal immigrant drunk driver slammed into the Coxes' car, leaving 66-year-old Judy dead at the scene and 72-year-old Craig a bereaved widower. The perpetrator had six previous DUI convictions and multiple license suspensions.

Obviously, not every "undocumented" person is a drunken driver; however, this case shows what can happen when we give driver's licenses to people who have already shown disregard for the law. If breaking immigration laws doesn't matter, why worry about breaking other laws?

Judy Cox's tragic death happened shortly after then-Gov. Ted Kulongoski's executive order cracked down on licensing rules "to more effectively prevent fraud and criminal activity." The 2008 Legislature put the new standards in state law.

Testimony from the Oregon Association of Nurseries, a key backer of SB833, talks about public safety and how loosening rules for obtaining a license would reduce the number of uninsured drivers. The fact is that since the law was changed, the Oregon Department of Transportation says, the "before and after changes in driver licensing requirements show no apparent impact on unlicensed/uninsured driving."

Advocates also say SB833 would "create more access to job opportunities," because these undocumented people could legally drive to work. Yet, federal law prohibits employment for people without proper legal presence.

OAN testimony said this bill "helps Oregon residents follow the law by providing their identity," etc. It seems hypocritical for backers of SB833 to want these people to "follow the law" for licensing, but not for immigration.

Issuing these Oregon driver's licenses is basically giving people who aren't here legally state-sanctioned permission to be on our roads and, therefore, in our country.

Supporters say undocumented residents are here anyway, so they should have driver's licenses. Are they saying it's OK for some people to ignore some laws but not others? For a free society, citizens need to respect and obey the law.

If we adopt government policies condoning unlawful behavior, aren't we jeopardizing the rule of law? I understand some are seeking a better life for their families; however, good intentions don't give people rights to disobey the law by being in the country illegally.

We should streamline the federal process to gain proper legal status. Lawful immigration is great; breaking the law is not. SB833 moves our state in the wrong direction and sends the wrong message.

[Republican Kim Thatcher](#) represents Keizer in the Oregon House of Representatives.

http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2013/04/granting_drivers_licenses_to_u.html

COMMENTS:



[Tim Buck Too](#)

Thatcher's ugly racist perspective is something less than subtle. Thatcher mentions two tragic cases where two drunk drivers committed what amounts (morally) to murder. Two cases where two drunk drivers were illegal immigrants. Two. Apparently Thatcher could find few or even no other cases where drunk driver homicides were committed by illegal immigrants.

Are we to assume that there have been no other cases of drunk driver homicides by anyone else but illegal immigrants? If there have been, why does she not refer to them also? Even in passing, if only to distinguish why hundreds of drunk driver homicides that occurred in Oregon over that timespan are not of concern to her, while two illegal immigrant crimes are?

Thatcher's vicious implication that illegal immigrants are more likely to commit DUI homicides is unworthy of any public official, let alone an elected lawmaker who represents decent civilized community like Keizer. Thatcher is a foul smear of cynically constructed bigotry on the decency of the people she represents and a blot on the Oregon House of Representatives.

Thatcher may represent what is left of the Republican Tea Party and do so accurately with shameless pride. But her sleazy attempt to provoke suspicion fear and hatred of vulnerable minorities only helps diminish what little influence her party can hope to retain going forward. Thatcher and her kind are the Dixiecrats of the 21st century GOP. They hold a malignant control over their own party but in doing so, they alienate voters who do not appreciate attempts to gain political power by attacking people in our community they perceive to be vulnerable.

They are on their way out but they intend to scatter as much political divisiveness along the way as they can. Maybe this is how the Republican Party ends. Not with a bang but with a stench.

[41 Minutes Ago](#)

• Reply



[pilotrockpat](#)

Tim, either your reading skills or your reasoning skills need improving.

- 1. There is nothing racist about being an illegal alien**
- 2. She states that "Obviously, not every "undocumented" person is a drunken driver"**
- 3. If you think the Republican Tea Party is wrong because it stands for lawful behavior, well that speaks for itself.**
- 4. Referring to illegal aliens as "vulnerable minority groups" shows your complete lack of understanding of the problem.**
- 5. Political divisiveness has started at the White House with promoting class envy, an attitude of "take from the rich and buy votes" policy and blaming others for failed policy.**

If believing in the law is on the way out then there is truly no hope for America.