

Follow-up: The Presidential Debate on Immigration

As a public service (if nothing else) I feel that it is my duty to let the agricultural interests know what is happening in the upcoming presidential runoff.

For instance, there is a new article by *The New York Times* which castigates both candidates for the highest office in the land for their inactivity on the immigration debate. Would farmers like to know about it? I think so, especially in light of the government effectively shutting off the spigot to the H-2B program which was the sister federal visa program to the H-2A program. Only H-2B was for non-agricultural workers, but closely associated akin endeavors such as forestry, plant nursery and the like. Hotel workers, restaurant employees, canneries, fisheries have all been crippled by the H-2B cap and close-off.

Can the same thing happen to H-2A agricultural workers on visas? That is up to government officials, like the two running for president this year. That is why their inactivity is so much in the spotlight of late and the subject of so much commentary in the media.

So, with that in mind, small wonder *The Times* is getting into the act as well. Here are some hints of their pique at the situation:

“Yes, immigration is a complicated and combustible issue for political candidates — and the economic meltdown is everyone’s top priority. No, that is no excuse for ignoring immigration or lying about it to voters, as John McCain and Barack Obama have been doing.

“Mr. McCain lied first, in a Spanish-language ad that accused Mr. Obama of helping to kill immigration reform last year, by voting for amendments that supposedly doomed a bipartisan bill. The ad lamented the result: “No guest worker program. No path to citizenship. No secure borders. No reform. Is that being on our side?”

“That is a jaw-dropping distortion. The bill wasn’t killed by any amendments. It was killed by a firestorm of talk-radio rage and a Republican-led filibuster.

... “Mr. Obama’s retaliatory ad, also in Spanish, was just as fraudulent. It slimed Mr. McCain as a friend and full-bore ally of restrictionists like Rush Limbaugh, even though Mr. Limbaugh has long attacked Mr. McCain’s immigration moderation. It quotes Mr. Limbaugh as calling all Mexicans stupid and ordering them to “shut your mouth or get out,” which he never did.”¹

So, there it is, folks. The vitriol remains. Not only will the candidates not take a stand on the matter—they are too engaged at the moment in lying about the other side’s stand to think of their own. Or, as *The Times* puts it:

“Immigration was broken before the candidates started this repugnant ad war, and looks as if it will stay that way for at least the duration of this campaign.

“They should get back to telling the truth about it, in English and in Spanish.”²

¹ “*Immigration Deception*,” An Editorial on the website of *The New York Times*. 9-18-08. Website at: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/19/opinion/19fri1.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin. (accessed 9-20-08).