

Third Presidential Candidate Debate, Oct. 13, 2004 in Tempe, AZ

Moderator, Correspondent Bob Schieffer: Let's go to a new question, Mr. President. I got more e-mail this week on this question than any other question. And it is about immigration.

I'm told that at least 8,000 people cross our borders illegally every day. Some people believe this is a security issue, as you know. Some believe it's an economic issue. Some see it as a human-rights issue.

How do you see it? And what we need to do about it?

Bush: I see it as a serious problem. I see it as a security issue, I see it as an economic issue, and I see it as a human-rights issue.

We're increasing the border security of the United States. We've got 1,000 more Border Patrol agents on the southern border.

We're using new equipment. We're using unmanned vehicles to spot people coming across.

And we'll continue to do so over the next four years. It's a subject I'm very familiar with. After all, I was a border governor for a while.

Many people are coming to this country for economic reasons. They're coming here to work. If you can make 50 cents in the heart of Mexico, for example, or make \$5 here in America, \$5.15, you're going to come here if you're worth your salt, if you want to put food on the table for your families. And that's what's happening.

And so in order to take pressure off the borders, in order to make the borders more secure, I believe there ought to be a temporary worker card that allows a willing worker and a willing employer to mate up, so long as there's not an American willing to do that job, to join up in order to be able to fulfill the employers' needs.

That has the benefit of making sure our employers aren't breaking the law as they try to fill their workforce needs. It makes sure that the people coming across the border are humanely treated, that they're not kept in the shadows of our society, that they're able to go back and forth to see their families. See, the card, it'll have a period of time attached to it.

It also means it takes pressure off the border. If somebody is coming here to work with a card, it means they're not going to have to sneak across the border. It means our border patrol will be more likely to be able to focus on doing their job.

Now, it's very important for our citizens to also know that I don't believe we ought to have amnesty. I don't think we ought to reward illegal behavior. There are plenty of

people standing in line to become a citizen. And we ought not to crowd these people ahead of them in line.

If they want to become a citizen, they can stand in line, too.

And here is where my opponent and I differ. In September 2003, he supported amnesty for illegal aliens.

Schieffer: Time's up. Senator?

Kerry: Let me just answer one part of the last question quickly, and then I'll come to immigration...

... Now with respect to immigration reform, the president broke his promise on immigration reform. He said he would reform it. Four years later he is now promising another plan.

Here's what I'll do: Number one, the borders are more leaking today than they were before 9/11. The fact is, we haven't done what we need to do to toughen up our borders, and I will.

Secondly, we need a guest-worker program, but if it's all we have, it's not going to solve the problem.

The second thing we need is to crack down on illegal hiring. It's against the law in the United States to hire people illegally, and we ought to be enforcing that law properly.

And thirdly, we need an earned-legalization program for people who have been here for a long time, stayed out of trouble, got a job, paid their taxes, and their kids are American. We got to start moving them toward full citizenship, out of the shadows.

Schieffer: Do you want to respond, Mr. President?

Bush: Well, to say that the borders are not as protected as they were prior to September the 11th shows he doesn't know the borders. They're much better protected today than they were when I was the governor of Texas.

We have much more manpower and much more equipment there. He just doesn't understand how the borders work, evidently, to say that. That is an outrageous claim.

And we'll continue to protect our borders. We're continuing to increase manpower and equipment.

Schieffer: Senator?

Kerry: Four thousand people a day are coming across the border.

The fact is that we now have people from the Middle East, allegedly, coming across the border.

And we're not doing what we ought to do in terms of the technology. We have iris-identification technology. We have thumbprint, fingerprint technology today. We can know who the people are, that they're really the people they say they are when they cross the border.

We could speed it up. There are huge delays.

The fact is our borders are not as secure as they ought to be, and I'll make them secure.