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Ruben Navarrette Jr: GOP Finds New Way to Enrage Latinos

I don't always agree with newspaper columnist [Ruben Navarrette, Jr.](#) but his most recent column, regarding talk of altering the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, seems so completely correct that I'm going to take the liberty of reprinting almost all of it here.

Supposedly, elephants don't forget. But these days, when it comes to the explosive issue of immigration, I wonder if they even bother to think.

Not from the looks of it. Not when top Republicans in Congress are toying with the wacky and wicked idea of rewriting the 14th Amendment to eliminate so-called birthright citizenship.

A half-dozen prominent Senate Republicans have called for a review of Section 1, which dictates that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States," to see if they can find a way to exclude the U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has joined Sens. John Cornyn of Texas, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, John Kyl of Arizona, Charles Grassley of Iowa, and John McCain of Arizona in demanding a national debate on the issue.

Given the devastating effect such a debate would have -- chiefly on the GOP -- one wonders whether these six Republicans and others supporting such a brainless idea are secretly working for the Democrats. They're certainly not working for the long-term best interests of their own party.

Not in light of the fact that Latinos, the fastest-growing demographic in the country, increasingly consider the GOP brand toxic. This fight will close the deal because Latinos operate by a simple code: "Say what you will about the adults, but leave the children alone."

Still, in a way, it must be nice to be a Republican.

You don't have to worry about being morally consistent. You're not tied down by any core principles. You don't have to worry about being honest, logical or sincere. You can sell out and simply say whatever your constituents want to hear, even if it means uttering something totally different from what you used to believe just a few years ago.

For instance, how strange that a party whose members, whenever there are hearings for a Supreme Court nominee, put on a great show about adhering to a strict interpretation of the Constitution and not giving into judicial activism would now be flirting with a kind of legislative activism that defiles the very Constitution they supposedly revered.

How curious that a party whose members insist time and again that they have no problem with legal immigrants, and that they are only trying to run off the illegal variety, would destroy its credibility by going after a group of legal immigrants simply because critics don't approve of the process by which these people obtained legal status.

Finally, how unfortunate that a party whose leaders in Congress used to have the good sense to thwart legislation written by fellow Republicans seeking to deny citizenship to the U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants would now cave in to pressure from voters and pursue a course of action that they formerly claimed was unwise and unnecessary.

The GOP was right the first time. This debate is unwise and unnecessary. It's also unseemly.

Republicans in Congress are acting like schoolyard bullies and picking on a group that, at least for the moment, can't defend itself -- children. Sadly, that's probably part of the appeal. Think about it. Republicans like to pick on illegal immigrants and U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants because those people can't vote.

But when Republicans have the chance to do something substantive about illegal immigration by punishing those who hire illegal immigrants, they never have the guts to follow through. Instead, to stay in the good graces of business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, they pore over immigration bills and carefully take out language calling for sanctions on employers.

It's easier to try to punish children for the sins of their parents. After all, employers vote; children don't.

At least not yet. Republicans are obviously worried about what's going to happen to their candidates in the future when these so-called anchor babies grow up. The concern is that, when the sons and daughters of illegal immigrants earn the right to vote, they'll start settling scores for the despicable way in which their parents were treated -- hunted, demonized, exploited, scapegoated etc. -- often with the blessing of the GOP.

That's a lot to answer for. So naturally, Republicans are trying to put off this reckoning as long as possible. But by foolishly going down this road, they're further enraging the current crop of Latino voters -- and other Americans of good will -- and thus ensuring that the bill comes due that much sooner.

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