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LETTER: Immigration reform can help Tennessee's economy

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Thank you for your editorial in Tuesday's paper (Feb. 5) about immigration. Remember when Tennessee legislators said that immigration was the federal government's responsibility but since the federal government wasn't doing its job, they would have to do it at the state level. The legislation started in Arizona and spread like wildfire to Tennessee. Well, Congress finally listened and several U.S. senators from both parties have drafted legislation to fix the broken immigration system. It will address those already here as well as those still to come. I commend them for their efforts.

Soon, thanks to this legislation, millions of people will no longer live in fear of being arrested and deported — there will be a pathway to citizenship. Families will no longer be torn apart. The United States will continue to be the country where people want to come because of our freedoms and diversity.

The inscription on the Statue of Liberty says it so eloquently, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door." In difficult times when our economy struggles, we forget that message and look at immigrants as a burden on our already stressed economic system. Sadly, throughout our history, immigrants were the scapegoats for our nation's economic downturns. Their positive contribution of buying goods and services, of paying taxes, of providing an entrepreneurial spirit, and of bringing a renewed sense of faith was overlooked.

It's good to remember that our great nation is a nation of

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immigrants. Even those first humans who crossed the Bering Strait into North America, tens of thousands of years ago, were immigrants. More cultures are blended together here than in any other nation on earth. We are the world. As new immigrants assimilate into the American culture, they will make contributions as great as their predecessors did.

There is a great opportunity here that I hope Tennessee will seize. Gov. Haslam can send a signal to all countries that Tennessee not only respects, but encourages diversity; that their companies are welcome here and will be successful. How much easier will it be for our economic development team to get the best companies to locate to Tennessee if they can tout our hard-working, multilingual citizenry. We already have excellent examples of foreign companies that created jobs for Tennesseans — Nissan in Smyrna and Volkswagen in Chattanooga. Additionally, our multilingual citizens can be enlisted to market goods and services of Tennessee companies overseas.

However, time is not our ally. Other states are already preparing to secure as much of the new business as possible. This is one time Tennessee does not want to lead from behind because we will be left behind.

Don Enss

Cooper Road



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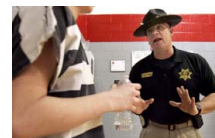
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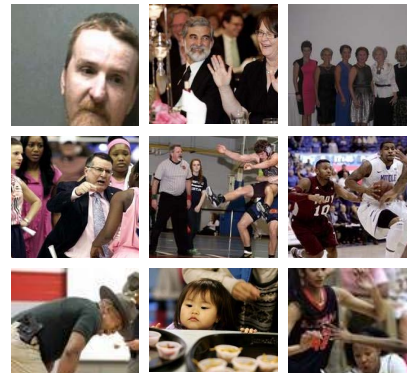
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