

By Congressman Steve King

In November 2008, White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel famously said, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.” The Obama White House has followed this Rahmism to a tee.

Last year, the Obama administration utilized our economic crisis to nationalize the largest entities they could get their hands on. From General Motors to Chrysler to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to AIG and three large investment banks, at times President Obama’s domestic agenda appeared no different than Hugo Chavez’s.

The White House pushed hard last spring for a cap and tax plan that would force American companies to comply with costly new energy regulations, thus giving companies in China, India and foreign countries without these rules a competitive advantage. Thankfully the American people spoke out and effectively killed this bill.

In town hall meetings and Tea Parties across the country, we’ve seen the American people have a similar reaction to the Obama administration’s attempt to pass a national health care bill. Created in the backrooms of Washington and flavored to please special interest groups and lobbyists, this health care bill became a toxic stew that the American people have rejected by the bowlful, the ladleful and the spoonful.

And now there are signs that the White House is moving on to a new target: comprehensive immigration reform. President Obama met with Sens. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) on Thursday to work on a bill that would grant amnesty to the 12 million-20 million illegal aliens currently in the United States.

The American people flatly reject any form of amnesty. In 2006 and 2007, they jammed Capitol Hill phone lines with calls in opposition to a Senate bill that would have granted amnesty to illegal aliens. The national opinion on illegal immigration has not changed.

According to a recent Rasmussen national survey, 67 percent of U.S. voters say that illegal immigrants are a significant strain on the U.S. budget. Not only do they believe illegal aliens are a strain on our national budget, they also believe that the government welcomes this strain. Sixty-six percent of U.S. voters believe the availability of government money and services draw illegal immigrants and 56 percent say the policies and practices of the federal government encourage people to enter the United States illegally.

A recent example of this is the recent case of an illegal alien in Schuyler, Nebraska. In February, an illegal alien tried to turn herself in at the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office in nearby Omaha because she thought it would get her on the path to U.S. citizenship. She believed this was an acceptable road to citizenship because President Obama and liberals in Congress continue to promote and support amnesty in their public comments.

I agree with the Obama administration that our current economic crisis warrants action on immigration policy. However, rather than grant amnesty, we need to crack down on illegal immigration to provide opportunities to American workers looking for jobs. There are 15.3 million unemployed American citizens while the Pew Hispanic Center reports that eight million illegal aliens hold American jobs.

I have introduced a bill called New IDEA (Illegal Deduction Elimination Act) that will immediately reduce America's unemployment and result in the hiring of millions of unemployed Americans. New IDEA will crack down on employers and illegal workers and level the playing field for law-abiding American employers and employees.

New IDEA will make E-Verify permanent and authorize its use on all current and prospective employees. E-Verify is an online government system that enables employers to determine whether an employee is eligible to work in the U.S. E-Verify is currently a voluntary program that by law can only be used on new hires.

Under New IDEA, employers that use E-Verify will have "safe harbor." By using E-Verify to check the legal status of new hires, employers will not be punished if they mistakenly hire an illegal alien. Employers who fail to check their employees via E-Verify or ignore proof of an employee's illegal status will be subject to wage and benefit taxation, including interest and penalty on past taxes.

We cannot allow the Obama administration to use our current economic crisis to dramatically reshape America to fit its liberal political agenda. The economic crisis does present opportunities for reform, but we need common-sense solutions that protect America's sovereignty and puts Americans back to work.

Immigration law needs to be designed to enhance the economic, social and cultural well-being of the United States. We must reject amnesty, pass New IDEA, get Americans back to work and dramatically reduce the strain of illegal immigration on our economy.