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The economics behind the politics of immigration

Pat Marrin | Mar. 3, 2011
Immigration and the Church

For readers who want to go behind the rhetoric from either the right or the left to the nuts and bolts of the immigration reform issue, link to the columns of Mary Sanchez in the Kansas City Star. **www.kansascity.com/opinion/mary_sanchez/** [1].

Sanchez, a veteran reporter and fact-based columnist, neatly identifies the divide in the State of Kansas between the anti-immigrant agenda of Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who played a significant role in the drafting of Arizona SB1070, and the pragmatist politics of Governor Sam Brownback.

In her March 3 column, Sanchez tells about a meeting between the Kansas Business Coalition and 70 members of the Kansas Legislature. The coalition represents the agribusinesses and construction trades that rely heavily on immigrant labor and that are concerned about the costs of proposed state regulations designed to prevent undocumented people from working. The governor has acknowledged publicly that immigration is a federal issue, but has not yet said he would veto pre-emptive state laws.

What Sanchez?s 430-word column does not have space to explore is the irony that many businesses that need immigrant labor are not eager to have state or federal immigration rules that would expose unfair labor and workplace practices that thrive where legal status is blurred and workers have no legal protections. Nor are consumers eager to pay higher prices for meat, fresh produce, service and construction jobs to reflect better treatment of workers. Because economics drives politics, postponing immigration reform and keeping millions of people in the shadows serves a purpose, even as it shames all of us who profit and benefit from it.

[Pat Marrin is editor of Celebration, the worship resource of the National Catholic Reporter. For more reflections on immigration reform and the challenge this poses for both church and nation, visit www.celebrationpublications.org/conference.]

Immigration and the Church To see all of *NCR*'s coverage of immigration, see our new blog: **Immigration and the Church** [2]. To receive a weekly e-mail update with highlights from the blog, **follow this link** [3] to the sign-up page. If you already receive e-mail alerts from NCR, add **Immigration and the Church** to your profile.

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Links:
[1] http://www.kansascity.com/opinion/mary_sanchez/
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