

Social Security's Benefactor...Illegal Immigration

☒ The public perception of illegal immigrant workers is one of people being paid on a cash basis, and employers fully aware that they are employing illegal aliens. The spectacle of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raiding a business to catch these lawbreakers hits newspapers and television broadcasts periodically to help fuel this perception. This may have been the majority of illegals in our workforce at one time, but it is impractical to think this is how 12 million or more illegal immigrants work in this country now. People would probably be surprised to know that there is a government agency that has perhaps the greatest resource of information about illegal aliens, and purposefully withholds this information from ICE. This agency is the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Notification of a problem to employers does exist in what is known as the "no match" letter. This is a letter sent from SSA to over 9 million people per year. It is a document sent to employees (often through their employer), which informs them that their SS# does not match their name in the SSA database. Often these "no-match" letters can be explained as a data entry error, or a name change (such as marriage). However, when the error is not corrected under any of these simple scenarios, it is a signal that the individual could be working in the country illegally. SSA has no specific rules if the letter is not resolved. They don't inform ICE, they don't have steps for the employer, they just continue to send letters. This can go on for years.

Normally one could attribute this lack of direction as typical government agency incompetence. This may not be the case here.

For fear of prosecution, companies often take no action when these letters go unresolved. Social Security taxes still are collected under the employee's bad information. What does SSA do with this money, since there is no account for this individual? There must be a pile of money with nobody's name on it at SSA. If you are the head of SSA, and every day your agency is inching closer to the time when you are paying out more than you take in, this is a nice line item to have.

If Congress was interested in solving the problem of illegal immigration, a few simple steps could go a long way.

- Update the Social Security Card. There have been 50 cards issued since its inception, and all are still valid and easily forgeable. Security similar to the US passport should suffice.
- Inform Employers that if their employee "no match" issue is not resolved within 90 days, and they continue to employ that person, there will be a hefty daily fine.
- Unresolved issues must be forwarded on to ICE by SSA for further investigation regardless of termination.
- Protect from litigation any employer who terminates an employee for not resolving the "no match" letter.

It is clear that SSA has no incentive to solve this problem despite having some of the best information on possible illegal immigrants in the workforce. They don't want to end the slush fund that has no corresponding obligation for payout. The next time there is some big raid on the news, don't buy into the hype. There are many more where they came from, and SSA has a good idea who they are. Closing this huge loophole may deplete funds to Social Security, but would truly start the process of solving this problem.