

A most painful issue

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Chief editorial writer Laura Ofobike's Oct. 30 column on immigration ("Smothering dreams of immigrant children") pointed up again why this is one of the most difficult and painful issues we have to deal with.

There are so many aspects, with so many possible responses, we could make valid arguments for and against almost any proposed policy.

The thing that most worries people concerned about immigration is numbers. Immigration pressure is so great that we could easily double our population in a few years if we opened our borders to unlimited immigration, and even immigration advocates might not like that.

The immigration issue makes strange bedfellows, with President Bush and Sen. Edward Kennedy allied, unions and employers allied, and environmentalists and Pat Buchanan allied.

Immigration is rapidly changing American society, and we need a national policy based on a thoughtful consideration of the issues.

But interests are so diverse and emotions so high that there seems to be no chance of getting such consideration. People with different views talk past each other and refuse to deal with the arguments of those with other views.

Immigration will continue, but we will never again have open borders, so we need to decide how many immigrants we should admit, which applicants should be admitted and how to reduce the rate of illegal immigration. Policy should acknowledge the finite nature of our resources.

Any decisions would be painful, but we should stop drifting.

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