

**Business and Economic Research Center
Jennings A. Jones College of Business
Middle Tennessee State University
Box 102
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
(615) 898-2610
kkulp@mtsu.edu
www.mtsu.edu/~berc**

Sidney A. McPhee
**President
Middle Tennessee State University**

E. James Burton
**Dean
Jennings A. Jones College of Business**

David A. Penn
BERC Director

Horace E. Johns
Executive Editor

Sally Ham Govan
Publications Editor/Designer

Tennessee's Business provides an exchange of ideas in the fields of economics and business among businesspersons, academicians, and government officials. The opinions expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Business and Economic Research Center, the Jennings A. Jones College of Business, or Middle Tennessee State University, but are the responsibility of the individual authors. The material may be reproduced with acknowledgement of the source. Middle Tennessee State University, a Tennessee Board of Regents university, is an equal opportunity, nonracially identifiable, educational institution that does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Send address changes to *Tennessee's Business*, Business and Economic Research Center, P.O. Box 102, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132, (615) 898-2610, or kkulp@mtsu.edu. AA271-0508

AUBER Publications Award of Excellence
1991, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2007

Many Americans favor a path to legal status but insist that we secure our borders and that immigrants follow the legal route to citizenship.

There is a strong backlash against illegal immigrants in the United States. Most Americans agree that something must be done to secure our borders in order to stop the flow of illegal immigrants into America and to reform immigration laws in order to address the status of 12 million or more already here illegally.

The main reason behind the strong backlash against illegal immigrants is the large number of illegal Mexicans who have crossed our southern border. Formerly, they were usually males who came to work in the United States and frequently traveled back and forth. Now, return trips are riskier; in recent years, entire families have crossed the border illegally, intending to stay permanently. More children of illegal immigrants have been born in the United States. By law they are considered U.S. citizens despite the illegal entry and status of their parents.

The right to education, social services, health care, drivers' licenses, and so forth has become a political hot potato. What is to be done? It is unlikely that an amnesty pathway to citizenship—like the one in 1986 that excused many illegals—will be passed to deal with current illegals in the United States in the near future.

In 2005, the McCain-Kennedy bill, finally defeated in 2006, proposed that illegal immigrants in the United States for five or more years could stay if they chose, provided they continued to work and pay taxes (including any back taxes), learned English, and paid at least \$3,250 in fines/fees.

The special problem of children has amplified the debate. Addressing this issue in early 2007, Deborah Macmillan, a member of the League of Women Voters Immigration Study Committee, said, "Overall amnesty similar to that in the 1986 law seems unlikely. Amnesty for individuals educated in our schools whose parents brought them to this country when the children were too young to play any part in the decision to enter without documents or to overstay their visas is a more likely outcome."

Although there was a huge outcry over the McCain-Kennedy bill, citizens seem to be softening a little on the possibility of illegals eventually becoming citizens—at least in Tennessee. According to an MTSU poll released in March, 47 percent of Tennesseans favored a guest worker program compared to 41 percent last year, and 42 percent opposed the program compared to 50 percent last year.

Even though many Americans favor a path to legal status, by and large they still insist that we secure our borders and that immigrants follow the legal route to citizenship. As Ruben Navarrette, a columnist for the *San Diego Union Tribune*, said, "They need to accommodate America instead of demanding that America accommodate them."

—Horace Johns, executive editor