MULVANEY ON IMMIGRATION

First, many folks have asked why I am talking about immigration at all, given that it isn't the most pressing of issues for a lot of people. And, like an overwhelming majority of people, I believe there are many other issues Congress should focus on, like jobs and the economy, spending and Obamacare. However, when I am specifically asked by a group of constituents, a reporter or another member to talk about immigration, I am willing to do so. I wouldn't be doing my job if I told a group of people I represent that I wasn't willing to talk about something that was important to them.

As for my position on immigration, a lot of people have been misled by news outlets, saying that I was advocating for amnesty or a "special pathway to citizenship" for those who are here illegally. Nothing could be further from the truth (and indeed, those who took the time to read the articles will know that amnesty is never part of my discussions on immigration). Simply put: I don't support amnesty, and won't vote for it.

What I talk about at town hall meetings and continue to say today is the exact same thing I have said at every other gathering for the past few years, from Tea Party meetings to NAACP forums -- that immigration reform means: 1) <u>border security first</u>; 2) an improved legal immigration system; and 3) figuring out how to address the folks who are here illegally.

On the first point -- and it is absolutely the first point, in that it must be the first priority in any discussion of immigration reform -- border security doesn't just mean building a fence. It means more border patrol and a better use of technology to ensure the border is secure. It also means better enforcement of our visa overstay problem -- because almost half of the people who are here illegally didn't walk across the border, they came here legally through our airports and stayed beyond their legally permitted time. That is why I have cosponsored Rep. Trey Gowdy's "Strengthen and Fortify Enforcement (SAFE) Act." This bill would strengthen our existing immigration laws. It improves existing border security methods, including our current visa system. While this bill on its own doesn't answer many of the outstanding immigration questions, like enhanced border security, worker verification, or streamlined legal immigration, these initiatives help move us in the right direction.

I also recognize our current border security isn't working, especially considering the influx of tens of thousands of children crossing our border illegally and the reports of illegal aliens committing violent crimes. That is why I also support a bill by Rep. David Schweikert to send National Guardsmen to the border to help secure it and gain operational control. The truth is, we have to send those people back to their home countries. And we have to see the President enforcing the laws on the books before we can believe he will enforce a better immigration system that Congress - not the President - comes up with.

On legal immigration, I think we have to be honest with ourselves and admit that our current system doesn't work. Examples are numerous: we use a "lottery" to allow people to come to our country, instead of seeking out people with job skills; we use a centuries-old "family tree" system that is so arcane that it can take 15 years for a citizen's spouse to be granted permanent status; we educate people here in high-tech areas, then send them to China or Europe to work. One of my favorite bizarre examples is that we only accept 1500 Irish immigrants every year - from a country that literally helped build this

nation. Bottom line: for a nation that prides itself on being born of legal immigration, it is far too hard to get here legally.

Finally, as for the folks who are here already (and illegally), we hear most about the two "extreme" solutions: full amnesty or deporting every illegal immigrant. Neither of those is ever going to work. Amnesty is an absolute non-starter and I do not support it (as is its newest incarnation: "pathway to citizenship"). I also do not support the Senate immigration bill. Similarly though, we are never -- never -- going to round up 11 million people and ship them out of the country. Anyone telling you anything else is lying to you.

So, what lies between amnesty and boxcars? The answer: trying to figure out who has to go (and how best to do that) and who gets to stay (and under what conditions).

My argument is that there is something inherently different between one illegal immigrant who came here as an adult, has a DUI, and a history of domestic violence - and another who came here as an 18-month-old child, went to school, and has a job.

And treating those two people the same makes no sense whatsoever.

How we treat the 11 million people is something we should discuss as a nation. But we should do it frankly and honestly.

I am happy to talk about immigration. In fact, I think it is important to talk about immigration. Because if conservatives like me don't tell people what we believe, then somebody else is going to try to tell people what we believe...and I am fairly confident that I won't like how liberals define my views on anything. But just because the issue is difficult, or complex, or uncomfortable doesn't mean we can ignore it. There has to be a way to solve this problem in a way that helps us build a healthy economy. A way that protects American workers while creating even more American jobs. A way that gets us back to being the great nation of immigrants that we are. And any solution to this problem must come from Congress, not from the Executive.

And that is what I am looking for.