

By Marisa DeFranco: President's actions an affront to this country's rule of law

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In the aftermath of an election rout, Democrats and immigration-amnesty activists are clamoring for President Barack Obama to take executive action and grant work permits or extend even more benefits to 5 million or more undocumented immigrants.

Obama honored those requests in a nationwide speech Thursday night.

Such action is a terrible idea and the arguments amnesty activists use to support it are emotional, not rational. If rationality prevailed in the contentious area of immigration, no one would seriously argue for unilateral executive action to legalize a large number of people who have broken our laws. Respect for the law must come first.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was a direct cause of the chaos at the border we saw this past summer. Amnesty activists want everyone to believe that the sole cause of the border surge was violence in Central America. They are hiding the truth. I have represented immigrants for the past 18 years, including women and children from those countries. It has been hideously violent, especially for girls, for the past two decades. But the number of border crossings did not hit an all-time high until after DACA because illegal immigration operates through rumor and false hope. And no amount of punditry that Obama's executive action will only affect immigrants in the U.S. will change the chaos and disorder at the southern border. In fact, it will ignite a new, larger wave of illegal immigration.

But even if not one single additional illegal crossing resulted from this order, it would still be wrong on the merits. Amnesty activists argue that many of the 5 million have been here more than 10 years here anyhow, so we should just legalize them? That argument is disrespectful of the law. Since when do we reward people because they managed to outrun the law for a certain period of time?

President Obama should consider the millions of people who have followed the legal process and waited outside our borders for the green card numbers to come up. Some have died, been separated from loved ones, and endured many hardships. Where is the fairness and justice for them?

As a country, if our chief executive usurps the rule of law for the people who broke the law, our message to the people who obeyed the law is this -- you are dupes. And this message will only encourage more disrespect for our sovereign laws.

Another argument from the activists is that the president must act because deportation is tearing families apart. Consider for a moment who put these families in their current situation: no one forced undocumented to start families.

President Obama must do the right thing and allow immigration to go through the legislative process. He will make a powerful statement to the world that our laws must be respected, and he will show true leadership by putting what is good for America ahead of the wants of his party and special interests.

That Obama has chosen to ignore U.S. law tells foreigners that we are a nation to be disrespected.

Coming Monday: The solution to America's immigration crisis. Marisa DeFranco is an immigration lawyer with an office in Middleton.

