

only bring up one amendment at a time. It has to be approved by the other side before you can call it up. If you can't call it up, it ceases to be an amendment that can be voted on postcloture, even if it is germane. So the result is, we could proceed with this process in a way that does not allow it to be improved in a significant way.

I am worried about my friend, Mr. Bill. I don't believe his teachers back there in the civics class would be pleased with how he has been bumped around. They would not be pleased that he had not gone through the normal process. I will point out some of the loopholes in poor, old Mr. Bill, as we go along today. Those loopholes will indicate this bill should not be passed in its present form.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend, the Senator from Alabama, because I know he has a great deal more to say about the pending legislation this morning. I appreciate his allowing me a few minutes to discuss my view. I thank him for his courtesy.

I thank my friend from Colorado, Senator SALAZAR, for his leadership, for his involvement and his integrity. What a great honor it has been for me to work with him on this and a number of other issues over several years. I thank him.

Immigration reform is long overdue. I am proud to support this historic overhaul of our immigration system. This bill represents weeks, months and, in some cases, years of work by the proponents of this bill. The President has shown tremendous leadership on this issue and has dedicated countless hours to the process. While I may not be in agreement—and most of us are not in agreement—with each and every provision of the bill, it offers a good starting point for debate and a good framework. The proponents of this bill have come together to try to fix one of the most serious issues facing our country. We have put partisan politics aside in order to forge a consensual proposal to allow us to start a full floor debate on immigration reform. Others need to do the same.

Those of us from border States witness every day the impact illegal immigration is having on our friends and neighbors, our county and city services, our economy, and our environment. We deal with the degradation of our lands and the demands imposed on our hospitals and other public resources. However, I have learned over the last several years this is not only a border State problem; this is a national problem. It affects the dairy farmers in Vermont and the cattlemen in Colorado. It also affects the poultry processors in Georgia, the construction worker in Nevada, and the housewife in Maine. Our current system doesn't protect us from people who want to harm

us. It doesn't meet the needs of our economy, and it leaves too many people vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Throughout this debate, we will be reminded that immigration is a national security issue, and it is. It is also a matter of life and death. We have hundreds of people trying to cross our borders every day, an estimated 12 million people living in the shadows of our country. While we believe the majority are hard-working people contributing to our economy and society, we can also assume there are some people who want to do us harm hiding among the millions who have come here only in search of better lives for themselves and their families. We need new policies that will allow us to concentrate our resources on finding those who have come here for purposes more dangerous than finding a job.

Last year the Senate passed a comprehensive immigration bill, but it never even got to conference. This year we realized we had to take a different approach if we wanted to enact real reforms. New ideas and concepts were incorporated into the bill that helped to enhance the comprehensive nature of the bill and ensure the strongest tools were in place to enforce our laws and secure our border. First and foremost among our priorities was to ensure this bill included strong border security and enforcement provisions. We need to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security has the resources it needs to secure our borders to the greatest extent possible. These include manpower, vehicles, and detention facilities for those apprehended. But we also need to take a 21st century approach to this 21st century problem. We need to create virtual barriers as well through the use of unmanned aerial systems, ground sensors, cameras, vehicle barriers, advanced communications systems, and the most up-to-date security technologies available.

This legislation mandates that before we can move forward with a program to address the undocumented workers currently in the United States or future workers wishing to enter, we must meet certain enforcement and security benchmarks that will let everyone know we are enforcing our laws and that we are not going to repeat the 1986 amnesty. These triggers include the hiring of 20,000 Border Patrol agents, the construction of 300 miles of vehicle barriers and 370 miles of fencing, the establishment of 105 ground-based radar and camera towers along the southern border, and the deployment of 4 unmanned aerial vehicles and supporting systems. It also includes the end of catch and release, the ability to detain up to 31,500 aliens per day on an annual basis, the use of secure and effective identification tools to prevent unauthorized workers, and the receiving, processing, and adjudication of applications for the undocumented workers applying for legal status.

Every one of these items must be in place and fully funded before a single

temporary worker enters our country or a single undocumented immigrant receives a permanent legal status in the United States. I believe these requirements are a substantial improvement over previous measures. Not only will this legislation finally accomplish the extraordinary goal of securing our borders, it will also greatly improve interior enforcement and put employers on notice that the practice of hiring illegal workers simply will not be tolerated. Business as usual is no longer acceptable, and neither is a de facto amnesty. This legislation would put in place an effective and practical employment verification system to replace the outdated I-9 system that all employers use. In the 21st century, it is unacceptable that employers are still recording important employment eligibility information with a pen and pad. We need real-time answers that will tell employers if the person sitting in front of them is not only eligible to work here but the person they actually claim to be. Employers will no longer be put in a position of judging documents presented to them at face value.

The employment verification system in this bill will allow employers to electronically verify identity and work eligibility through both DHS and the Social Security Administration, while also protecting the personal information of all U.S. workers. If we cannot adequately enforce our immigration laws at the worksite, employers will be able to continue to employ undocumented workers. That is not a scenario we will allow under this legislation.

We need the ability to have additional legal workers in this country. There are certain jobs Americans are simply not willing to do. For example, today in California, fruit is rotting on the vine and lettuce is dying in the fields, because farmers can't find workers to harvest their crops. At the same time resorts in my own State of Arizona can't open to capacity, because there aren't enough workers to clean the rooms. Restaurants are locking their doors because there is no one to serve the food or clear the dishes. We are facing a situation whereby the U.S. population does not provide the workers that businesses desperately need. Yet the demand for their services and product continues.

At the same time we have seen, time and time again under the current law, that as long as jobs are available in this country for people who live in poverty and hopelessness in other countries, those people will risk their lives to cross our borders. Our reforms need to reflect that reality and help us separate economic immigrants from security risks. This legislation does just that.

The most effective border protection tool we have is establishing a legal channel for workers to enter the United States after they have passed background checks and have secured employment. We need to establish a temporary worker program that permits workers from other countries to