impacted by large flows of immigrants into our country. How could it be otherwise? That is a basic economic principle—when supply goes up, the price goes down. When demand goes up and supply remains the same, the price goes up.

When I raised this point on the floor, Senator KENNEDY, during the immigration reform debate last year, responded to me. His solution was that we should raise the minimum wage. I responded that it is not my goal to have American citizens making $7 an hour; my goal is to create a free market economy where their labor is worth $12, $15, $18, or $25 an hour. These wage levels are being seen by workers in nonunion businesses in Alabama right now. We absolutely don't need to go back to a system that allows self-interested union organizers to force people into unions when they are already making higher wages then they have ever made before, as they are in Alabama. I absolutely don't believe that unions are the way to see us make progress on wages. But I am concerned that the net effect of large flows of immigration is that wages are being brought down. It is not responsible to have immigration policies that depress the wages of American workers.

Some of the immigrants are legal, but most are not legal. Together, they are pulling down wages of the Americans that compete with them in the labor market. We have had expert testimony to that effect. I cite to my colleagues a professor at the Kennedy School at Government at Harvard University, himself a Cuban refugee, George Borjas. He says that working wages for Americans have been pulled down by as much as 8 percent in the areas where immigration is highest. That is a significant amount. Instead of going up in a booming economy, wages have gone down. Alan Tonelson, a research fellow from the U.S. Business and Industry Council Educational Foundation testified that from 2000 to 2005, in job categories where competition from illegal immigrants is the highest, real wages—those adjusted for inflation—went down, even though demand for labor was going up. How could it be otherwise? Don't we believe in a free market? Does any farmer doubt that if more cotton and corn were brought into this country, the price of their product would go down? Certainly we know that. We deal with that issue every day in the Senate, and we understand it. Why that base economic free market principle would be denied and overlooked when it comes to how immigration effects the labor market is beyond my understanding.

So, sure, immigration is important. We are not trying to stop immigration. Immigrants are overwhelmingly good people, they are hard workers, and they want to make a better life for themselves and their families. But, we have to ask ourselves, what levels and types of immigration serve our national interest? How can we make sure our middle-class workers are not having their incomes substantially reduced in a time when the growth and prosperity of our nation should be putting part of the high profits being made into their pockets? We can make sure that lower and middle class Americans are benefitting from out surging economy if we do this immigration bill right. This bill doesn't do that, and that is why I oppose it.

I had a wonderful day yesterday with President Bush. We disagree on this issue. He made the comment in my hometown of Mobile that a Texan friend of his once said if we agree 100 percent on every issue, then one of us would not be needed. Well, we don't agree on this issue, but he has a good vision for America. He believes we need to do something about immigration and he has high ideals about it. He wants to fix our immigration system and he wants to fix it comprehensively.

I have said repeatedly, in the last 2 years of debate, that we do need a comprehensive fix, we need a guest worker program that actually will work and be effective, one that is responsive to the needs of the market without depressing the wages of the American worker. I have said that we need to replace the lawless system of immigration we now have with a lawful one, one that serves our national interests, and by that I mean the interests of the American worker and the long-term national interests of our country.

Sadly, I do not believe that the bill before the Senate comes close to creating a lawful system that serves our national interests. The Senate bill is a 750-page document that was plopped down here after only 48 hours of notice, without any committee hearings this year. It lacks cohesive policy goals. It is a political baby-splitting document crafted by politicians who were focused on the need to write something that could pass, rather than a document produced by professionals and experts and economists and law enforcement officials focused on how to create a system that will be honest and will work. That is what the debate is all about. Will the Senate bill actually work. So my disagreement with the legislation is not what it aspires to do, if I believed that it would do what it aspires to do—to secure the border and restore the rule of law then I'd be supportive of the bill.

You will hear my colleagues come to the floor and talk about their mama and grandma and that they emigrated from country X and we are all blessed because overwhelmingly, except for Native Americans—even their ancestors at one time came here—we are all descendants of immigrants. I want to be clear. Those of us opposed to the Senate bill are not against immigration. Instead, we want to do it right so that it serves the immigrants who come to America and serves America by selecting those who can be most benefited by the American experience and who will most benefit America.

We are indeed, I am afraid, moving to legislation that would repeat the error of 1986 in which amnesty was given and enforcement never occurred. Three million people were given amnesty then. Now we have 12 million people asking for amnesty again. What is the problem with the legislation? Let me share some thoughts.

First, under this legislation, the number of legal immigrants to be allowed into our country and to be given permanent legal status within the next 20 years will double. The legal number will double. Do you think most Americans understand that? I don't.

Let me briefly mention the history of immigration in our country.

From 1820 to 1879, we had what was called the great continental expansion, where people moved out toward the west. One hundred and sixty thousand came a year. Then it dropped off significantly.

From 1880 to 1924, they called it the great wave of immigration. Immigration averaged 580,000 people a year, a big movement of people into our country, and we continued to expand westward in our Nation. Then immigration again began to drop off, particularly during the Depression, and people's wages were down.

The period of 1925 through 1965 is sometimes referred to as the stop-and-settle period. During that time, immigration was at 180,000 a year, and the large great wave of immigrants that came in the decades before were assimilated into America. They became productive, mastered the language, and became part of a settlement and an assimilation that was important for our country.

In 1965, we developed the new system of immigration now known as chain migration, which resulted in about 500,000 immigrants a year up until 1990.

Since 1990, however, the number doubled, and it has been about 1 million a year. Since 2000, I suggest, counting the illegal flow, it has been at least 1.5 million a year, which is the highest rate of immigration in the history of our country.

This bill would basically double legal immigration and do very little to stop the illegal flow. This gives us no time for a stop-and-settle period but perpetuates the record high rates of immigration for an indefinite period. That is where we are historically, and we ought to understand that. I don't think anybody would dispute, basically, what I just summarized for you.

Let me explain how the Senate bill will double legal immigration. Under current law, 23.4 million immigrants, including 19.6 million green cards and 3.8 million workers, would be admitted and here in year 2027. But under the Senate bill, the numbers would be 47 million immigrants, composed of 38.1 million green cards, twice the 19.6 million green cards that would be issued under current law, and 8 million, almost 9 million temporary workers on top of that. That number of temporary