



## [Wait-And-See Is Not An Immigration Strategy](#)

Posted on March 23, 2010 by [Robert A. Kraft](#)

"...the time for comprehensive immigration reform is overdue, that our nation's system just isn't working." That was the gist of an excellent editorial this week in the [Dallas Morning News](#). Here are excerpts:

We don't know how many times we'll have to write that the time for comprehensive immigration reform is overdue, that our nation's system just isn't working. And however many times it takes, we will. Instead of getting better, our immigration problems keep getting worse, if that's possible.

Latest is the news that Homeland Security Director Janet Napolitano has suspended payments on the "virtual fence" that many reformers, including this newspaper, had hoped would increase security along the U.S.-Mexico border. The fence, so far, has been a big dud – and an expensive one.

The U.S. has paid Boeing about \$1 billion so far to develop a "virtual fence" that would rely on sophisticated electronics to track people illegally crossing our border with Mexico. Among other problems, *The New York Times* reports, Boeing failed to design tests that would work out the kinks.

Rather than keep pouring money down that hole, it's time to pursue an alternative. Options include the thermal-imaging devices, heat-seeking cameras and laptops that border agents want.

Of course, a real, physical fence is being built across parts of the U.S.-Mexico border. But there is no way enough fence can be built in a manner that seals the border from Brownsville to San Diego. We need some kind of electronic system to help border agents snare illegal crossers.

Some will want to use the apparent failure of the virtual fence to again do nothing on immigration reform this year, despite President Barack Obama's promise to pursue it and

the efforts last week by Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer and GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham to offer a serious overhaul.

Waiting around isn't going to solve the problem. If Congress falls prey to more wait-and-see, the nation won't have to wait long to see more scattershot local efforts, like the ill-advised one being pursued in the Arizona Legislature.

Some lawmakers there want to give local law enforcement the authority to charge an immigrant with trespassing if found in the state illegally. The immigrants wouldn't have to be accused of any other offense. Cops could just stop a suspected illegal immigrant while he is walking down the street and arrest him for not having valid papers. If this sounds good to you, please explain how this would not degenerate into profiling specific ethnicities based almost solely on their skin color.

The only good thing to say about the Arizona proposal is that it provides one more compelling reason for Washington to start creating a saner immigration system so that states and local governments aren't so tempted to take the law into their hands.