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Roach challenges myths of illegal immigration

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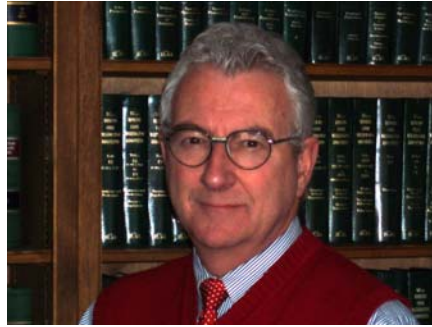
Why are there 12 million “uninvited guests” in this country? “It’s the economy, stupid,” Pasco immigration attorney Tom Roach told the Tri-Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday at its monthly meeting.

“This country creates more jobs than U.S.-born people can do,” he said, adding that illegal immigrants might not be so uninvited because of the many jobs they do.

“It’s not complicated why these people are here,” he said.

Roach, who’s worked in immigration law for 30 years, addressed the group of about 75 people at TRAC in Pasco and laid out five myths about illegal aliens as well as his solutions to the issue. It’s a presentation he’s given about 35 times during the past couple of years, he said.

Roach’s favorite myth is that illegal immigrants don’t pay taxes. They do pay taxes, he said, in many forms: Sales tax when shopping and property tax when they turn in monthly rent money. And federal income tax, Social Security tax and Medicare tax are deducted directly from their paychecks, he added. Margarita Gonzalez, membership/volunteer coordinator for the Girl Scouts of Eastern Washington & Northern Idaho, said she appreciated Roach’s coverage of the tax issue. She added that many illegal aliens don’t get tax refunds either.



Another myth is that illegal immigrants take jobs from Americans.

Not true, Roach said, because they work mostly in jobs that people born in the U.S. won’t do, such as farm work, cleaning hotel rooms and gardening labor.

“Immigrants are complementary to our society and our needs,” he said, contending the country’s unemployment rate has remained relatively steady as it has absorbed the work force of women after World War II as well as legal and illegal immigrants.

Roach also argued that illegal immigrants do learn English and assimilate, especially those in the second generation.

And though some people believe undocumented people come to the U.S. and take advantage of the welfare system, Roach said it’s impossible to use the system without a valid Social Security number.

Finally, Roach explained that many low-skilled workers can’t come into the U.S. legally because there aren’t enough green cards available.

First, a mandatory Social Security verification system is

needed, where every employer ensures every employee is documented, or faces harsh consequences.

That needs to happen simultaneously with a legalization program for the 12 million undocumented immigrants who already are in this country, Roach said.

He also proposed a fluctuating “safety valve” to allow the level of low skilled worker green cards to change year-to-year as needed.

If people want to take a stand on immigration reform, Roach recommended contacting Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., in person.

The chamber’s president, Edison Valerio, responded to Roach’s comments with a call to help one another.

“Who are we as humans? We need to help other people,” he said. “It’s not worth living without helping other people.”

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