

# She only has that one vote

*S.O.B.'s STORY (spouse of boss) DAN HAMMES*

Latinos are everyone's favorite people these days.

Democrats have long pursued their affection, but since election returns showed that Latinos overwhelmingly voted for Barack Obama, Republicans are now joining the effort to garner their support.

Before the dust settles, there is little doubt this country will have yet another immigration bill.

Politicians do this sort of thing because they want votes. Democrats currently enjoy the support of Latinos so now we will watch Republicans trip all over themselves in efforts to woo those same voters.

The legislation will likely offer amnesty to illegal immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for a minimum time yet to be established.

That's not all bad.

In fact, it makes sense.

While we may agree the manner in which those 10 million or 20 million – pick your number – illegals got here is wrong, it is absurd to think they could be rounded up and sent packing.

The lesson here is politicians change their views depending how people vote.

Which also makes some sense.

It's just too bad Heidy Baker can only vote once.

For those who don't know, Heidy Baker emigrated here from Germany. She became a citizen of this country after she married a U.S. soldier while he was stationed in her country.

Oh yeah, that soldier happened to be Vernon Baker.

Vernon Baker, the African American Army veteran, who lived up the Benawah Valley until his death in July 2010. Vernon Baker who earned the Medal of Honor for his service during World War II. Vernon Baker who became a world-wide sensation when President Clinton placed that medal around his neck in 1997. Vernon Baker about whom thousands of articles and books have been written.

That Vernon Baker.

Heidy Baker is the widow of an American hero.

It's just too bad she can only vote once.

This is one of those stories that is difficult to fathom even when it happens right here in Benewah County.

Before Vernon Baker succumbed to cancer, Heidy's daughter came to the U.S. from Germany with her son to help her mother care for her ailing husband. She has lived with her mother since. She hopes to continue to live here because Heidy, who is now alone, needs help.

The U.S. government does not see it that way. It prefers that Heidy's daughter leave. She is, after all, an immigrant.

And remember, Heidy only has just that one vote.

Now it is true that the people at immigration have worked with Heidy. They have been professional and polite by all accounts. But what she really would prefer to have a permanent resolution to the problem and to live knowing her daughter and grandson can be with her.

One would think this would be an easy problem for a member of Congress to remedy.

Apparently not.

It has been seven years since Heidy first attempted to make it possible for her daughter and grandson to stay with her. She has contacted Senator Jim Risch, Senator Mike Crapo and Representative Raul Labrador. They have been unable to help her.

It is true Rep. Labrador, a former immigration attorney, suggested she hire a lawyer. And, for just \$2,500 cash payment up front, one lawyer did offer to help. The problem is Heidy doesn't have \$2,500.

If that seems wrong, you're right.

The widow of a Medal of Honor recipient is on her own when it comes to battling the federal government over whether her family has done enough for this country to earn the right to stay together here in the United States.

At the same time, politicians of all persuasions will soon be falling all over themselves to help other immigrants secure permanent residency in the U.S.

If only Heidy had more than that one vote.

***DAN HAMMES is publisher of this newspaper.***