

# Why does Bob Schieffer talk to Raul Labrador?

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

When it comes to immigration reform, no Idahoan gets more attention than Republican Congressman Raul Labrador.

Responding to President Obama's executive order blocking the deportation of an estimated 5 million undocumented workers last week, he told National Public Radio:

"Mitch McConnell should say first thing tomorrow morning that he will not allow any appointments that (Obama's) administration has made. So there will be no hearings on the new attorney general. There will be no hearings on judges. There will be no hearings on anything this president wants and that he needs."

Sunday on "Face the Nation," Labrador told host Bob Schieffer: "Number one, it was illegal for the president to do this. ...We should censure the president of the United States. I think it's unfortunate that he did this. I think we need to lay out clearly why this is unlawful. I think we need to pass a funding bill that separates Homeland Security from that funding bill."

If you listen to Labrador carefully on this issue, you'll also hear him tell Schieffer that "if it was my decision, I would start passing legislation. In fact, I asked our leadership to start passing legislation two weeks ago."

Labrador draws heat from conservatives such as talk show host Laura Ingraham. And as the National Journal reported in August, it was Labrador who pressed the GOP conference to pass border security and deportation measures.

Just the same, you hoped for more from a native Puerto Rican and immigration attorney Idahoans elected to the 1st Congressional District seat four years ago.

Instead, Labrador picked a key point - just when the issue was gaining momentum and public support while the Senate had passed its bipartisan bill - to bail on the House Gang of Eight, which was crafting its own response.

Increasingly, he justifies his actions on the basis of political concerns rather than differences over policy. For more than a year, he has urged fellow Republicans to drop immigration reform as toxic.

"Anything that you pass to the Senate piecemeal, they're going to try to confer

ence it with their Senate bill," Labrador told the Huffington Post. "It's not worth doing it."

Idahoans need immigration reform more than a congressman who is gaining a national television profile. Their agricultural industry depends on it. There are now 50,000 undocumented workers in the Gem State - one of the few places where that population has increased.

You won't find a more conservative voice than Idaho Farm Bureau spokesman John Thompson, who recently told the Post Register of Idaho Falls that rather than criticizing Obama, Congress should point the finger at itself.

Just for the sake of argument, assume Labrador dispensed with the language of obstruction and recriminations - and instead reminded everyone:

- By any measure - 18,000 guards, 700 miles of fencing, dramatic increases in lighting, underground sensors, aircraft, drones and surveillance systems - the border with Mexico is more secure than ever. Fewer people are crossing it. And illegal immigration is down about 1 million since the peak of 12.2 million in 2009.
- Only a minority of undocumented workers want to become citizens. Most simply want work in this country, earn some money and then return home.
- Jobs - not welfare - draw people here. If you have a green card, you can't draw entitlements for five years. No guest worker is entitled to public assistance. And under the welfare reforms of the mid-1990s, people in this country illegally cannot draw benefits.
- Legal immigration doesn't deliver enough workers to meet Idaho agriculture's needs. And by limiting guest workers to 10 months, it ignores the year-round demands of Idaho's dairy and livestock industries.

Former U.S. Sen. Larry Craig was the last Idaho Republican to talk this way - and he's been retired for six years.

Labrador is the one Idahoan with the greatest potential to fix it. Why else would Bob Schieffer talk to

him? - M.T.