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Lou Barletta, the mayor of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, talks about what his town is doing about illegal immigration, "Lou Dobbs Tonight," Friday, 6 p.m. ET.

Dobbs: Bush, Senate 'lackeys' reach new low

By [Lou Dobbs](#)
CNN

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Editor's note: Lou Dobbs' commentary appears every Wednesday on CNN.com.

NEW YORK (CNN) -- The Bush White House and its lackeys in the Senate have reached a new low in their quest to bestow amnesty on 11 million to 20 million illegal immigrants, while doing as little as possible to secure our nation's borders and ports.

We're now being treated to a great spectacle of incompetence as the Senate holds hearings on immigration reform more than a month after it passed what Sens. John McCain, R-Arizona, Ted Kennedy, D-Massachusetts, Chuck Hagel, R-Nebraska, Mel Martinez, R-Florida, Bill Frist, R-Tennessee, and Arlen Specter, R-Pennsylvania, hailed as a grand and historic compromise.

In Miami this week, one of those hearings produced a memorable moment as the administration trotted out Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to appear before cameras discussing his immigrant father. The senators and the White House demonstrated that they have no shame in continuing to try to blur the line between legal and illegal immigration. And I, for one, believe their insult to the nation's top general and the American people is unforgivable.



Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is the son of an Italian immigrant.

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Theirs is not leadership; it's raw, cynical politics and cowardly obfuscation at its worst. I truly believe that President Bush and the Senate leadership owe the American people and Gen. Pace an apology.

President Bush and the Republican Senate leadership had already demonstrated just how out of touch they are with American citizens and the mood of the nation when they managed to push through, with help from all but four Democrats in the Senate, the legislative atrocity called the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act. The legislation would permit illegal immigrants to "earn" their citizenship by paying a fine and back taxes, learning English and holding a job for six years.

Trust between the American people and our government is imperiled by such thoughtless failures of leadership on the critical issues of immigration reform and border security.

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 called for at least 2,000 more Border Patrol agents per year along our border with Mexico to stop the unrelenting flow of people and illegal drugs into this country. But the Bush administration provided funding for only around 200 additional agents. President Bush then promised to deploy by August 6,000 National Guard troops to support the U.S. Border Patrol on the border with Mexico. Now, in mid-July, having already missed a June deadline, fewer than 900 have moved into place along the border.

While our federal government fails, state and local governments are being forced to fill the national leadership void. Twenty-seven state governments have passed some sort of legislation cracking down on illegal immigration. Many of these efforts are focused on employers and landlords who are hiring and housing illegal aliens and demanding proof of citizenship before granting unfettered access to social and health services.

Just this week, Colorado set the highest standard to date. Both houses of Colorado's Democrat-controlled state government approved a plan that will deny most non-emergency state benefits to illegal aliens. Colorado Gov. Bill Owens, a Republican, said an estimated 50,000 illegal immigrants may be affected by the measure, which will free up Medicare, Medicaid and unemployment insurance funds for legal state residents.

Inaction at the federal level is also inspiring some cities and counties around the country to enact laws to deal with this illegal influx. Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and Avon Park, Florida, are set to vote on important ordinances intended to fight the problems created by illegal immigration in their communities.

Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta put it as succinctly as possible: "I'm doing what the people of Hazleton elected me to do, and that's to protect them and protect the quality of life." Imagine that, an elected official following the will of the people and putting his constituents above politics.

The Hazleton City Council will take a final vote later this week on its Illegal Immigration Relief act, which would fine landlords \$1,000 for renting to illegal aliens. Hazleton's ordinance also would revoke the business permits of employers found guilty of hiring illegal aliens and make English the city's official language. The city council has already given its tentative approval to the ordinance by a vote of 4-1.

Mayor Tom Macklin of Avon Park has emulated Mayor Barletta's proposal and credits Hazleton with inspiring its actions. Avon Park City Council will vote later this month on its own ordinance against illegal immigration, which will fine landlords and employers who hire or rent to illegal immigrants.

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We can be thankful our local and state governments are beginning to take action on the illegal immigration crisis. And we can be grateful the Republican leadership of the House of Representatives is showing no signs of backing away from its commitment to finally establish secure borders. There's hope yet for the nation.

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