Trends. The Political Psychology of Expansion of Labor Rights for Illegal Immigrants

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The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has announced that it will extend various anti-discrimination rights to illegal immigrants. These rights will include job dismissal or discrimination because of race, sex, age, or religion. Illegal immigrants who are inappropriately dismissed or discriminated against are to be treated as legal workers with the possibility of back pay, punitive damages, and--with certain qualifications--even reinstatement. What will be the political psychological consequences of this labor rights expansion?

The expansion seems to support the US concept of human rights and civil rights for all--regardless of one’s legal status. It also may reinforce these rights for those who--at least theoretically--had them before the expansion. Moreover, it may decrease the probability and ease with which employers knowingly hire and then abuse illegal immigrants.

The expansion also may increase the amount of illegal immigration into the US--weakening the rule of law--as protection for them increases. The expansion also could be misused by illegal immigrants to bring suit against employers who did not violate discrimination laws and policies and who may not even have known that the immigrants were illegal at the time the immigrants were hired.