



## BACKGROUND BRIEFING: Rep. Steve King (R-IA)

### Carrying the Banner for Anti-Immigrant Extremists

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*“We could also electrify this wire with the kind of current that would not kill somebody, but it would be a discouragement for them to be fooling around with it. We do that with livestock all the time.”<sup>1</sup>*

- [Rep. Steve King](#), on ideal border fences, immigrants, and livestock.

One year ago, hundreds of immigrants were corralled into the National Cattle Congress in Waterloo, Iowa as a part of the now infamous immigration raid on the Agriprocessors meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa. Religious leaders and elected officials around the nation decried the raid, but not Congressman Steve King.

In a December 2008 op-ed in the Des Moines Register, King praised the immigration raid in Postville, calling it a ["step in the right direction."](#)<sup>2</sup> Then, in a February 2009 interview with [Radio Iowa](#),<sup>3</sup> King said that the raid "was a good thing in the long run." From the interview:

King is the top-ranking Republican on a House subcommittee on immigration, and King says he will keep pressing for action to reduce the number of illegal immigrants living in the U.S. "I do have to carry that banner and I do so willingly..."

King's perspective on the Postville raid, and his likening immigrants to cattle, are just two examples of a Congressional leader out of step with mainstream America and in step with the most disturbing arm of the extreme anti-immigrant movement.

#### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Extremist Authority**

Rep. King's bogus claims about immigrants have served as talking points for the extreme anti-immigrant movement.

In a press release dated [June 15, 2005](#),<sup>4</sup> King stated "Thousands of Americans die at the hands of illegal aliens every year. Our state and local governments serve as the front line of defense against terrorism and criminal aliens." And in a [May 5, 2006 column](#),<sup>5</sup> published on his House website, King claimed that a day without immigrants in America would mean "the lives of 12 U.S. citizens would be saved who otherwise die a violent death at the hands of murderous illegal aliens each day. Another 13 Americans would survive who are otherwise killed each day by uninsured drunk driving illegals."

According to the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#),<sup>6</sup> which debunked the claim, anti-immigration extremists echoed King's claim "repeated hundreds of times."

King's bogus claims have been parroted by the likes of:

- [Jim Gilchrist](#),<sup>7</sup> leader of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps who even used King's claims in a [fundraising appeal](#).<sup>8</sup>
- [Federal Immigration Reform and Enforcement \(FIRE\)](#)<sup>9</sup>
- [DavidDuke.com](#),<sup>10</sup> the online home of nationally known Klansman David Duke
- [TWORCA.org](#)<sup>11</sup> which describes itself as "News for White People Worldwide."
- The white nationalist [Council of Conservative Citizens](#),<sup>12</sup> who lauded King as "the Congressman who makes the left cringe."

The claims were also repeated in an April, 2007 [interview](#)<sup>13</sup> by William Gheen, President of Americans for Legal Immigration (ALIPAC). In the interview, Gheen says of King: "this is the man whose hand I want to be shaking" and that King has "helped our movement a great deal." This is the same William Gheen who, in October, 2007, infamously referred to Mexicans as "[Brown Nazis](#)"<sup>14</sup> on a Colorado radio show.

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Undocumented Immigration is a "Slow Motion Holocaust"**

[The Anti-Defamation League](#)<sup>15</sup> reported on King's use of "anti-immigrant rhetoric," which extends to comparing undocumented immigration to both a "slow motion Holocaust" and a "...slow-motion terrorist attack...":

Representing Iowa in the United States House of Representatives, Congressman Steve King\* (R-IA) has characterized immigrants – both legal and undocumented – as criminals and disease-carriers. He has spoken alongside leaders of border vigilante groups and advocated a border "wall" topped with electrified wire to stop what he has called a "slow motion Holocaust" of undocumented immigration into the United States. King addressed the House of Representatives and asserted that undocumented immigration is "a slow-rolling, slow-motion terrorist attack on the United States."

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Hero to Anti-Immigrant Extremists**

King's rhetoric is has been especially appealing to extreme right-wing separatist hate groups. For example, Rep. King was held in high esteem by Sam Francis, founder of the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens and author of their [Statement of Principles](#)<sup>16</sup> which advocates white nationalism.

In a posting at [VDare.com](#).<sup>17</sup> (a website named for the first "English child to be born in the new world") Writes Francis:

Hence, a good many people advocate making the English language the official language of the country. One such advocate is Rep. [Steve King of Iowa](#),<sup>18</sup> who has introduced a [bill](#)<sup>19</sup> in Congress to

do just that. If passed, it would require that “**all laws, public proceedings, regulations, publications, orders, actions, programs and policies**” be conducted in English, with some appropriate exceptions to protect public health, national security, commerce, etc.

King’s anti-immigrant position has made him a favorite of the groups created to block comprehensive immigration reform: Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and NumbersUSA.

Shortly after King was sworn in, in March of 2003, he was deemed to be a member who “deserve[d] special attention” by [FAIR](#).<sup>20</sup>

Two new members of the subcommittee deserve special mention: Reps. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and Steve King (R-IA). Both of these freshmen featured immigration reform themes in their election campaigns, and both introduced pro-reform legislation during their time as senators in the Tennessee legislature. (sic)

At an [August 2005 Capitol Hill Press Conference](#),<sup>21</sup> FAIR’s president Dan Stein joined with Rep. King and two of his colleagues, Rep. Charlie Norwood (R-GA), and Rep. J.D. Hayworth (R-AZ), to announce the introduction of the anti-immigrant CLEAR Act.

FAIR also has its own “[Congressional Task Force](#)”,<sup>22</sup> which convened a meeting in Iowa in December 27, 2007 that featured Rep. King alongside FAIR’s Julie Kirchner and Jack Martin, a Des Moines talk radio host.

At the start of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, [FAIR’s website](#)<sup>23</sup> stated the organization’s strong support of King:

King is a three-term congressman who has been one of the most active and vocal proponents of immigration enforcement. He has also been an unwavering and outspoken critic of amnesty and guest worker proposals.

In addition to FAIR, King also has ties to other anti-immigrant extremist groups. King joined NumbersUSA President Roy Beck and Michael Cutler, Fellow at the Center for Immigration at the “[Culture Conference](#)”<sup>24</sup> of the Concerned Women for America in January of 2007. Commenting on the list of speakers, CWA of California’s State Director and nationally recognized anti-immigrant advocate, Phyllis Nemeth, said, “If you long for clarity on the battling world views, or if you wonder how and why lies, both subtle and outrageous, that threaten our country’s future have been packaged as truth, you will gain insight from our roster of outstanding speakers.”

NumbersUSA president [Roy Beck called King](#)<sup>25</sup> and a select list of colleagues: “...grade-A Representatives for sensible immigration, these leaders have contributed greatly toward a more economically just and environmentally sustainable America.”

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Campaign Contributions from Anti-Immigrant Extremists**

King has not only stood side by side with anti-immigrant extremists, he has also been a financial beneficiary of their political action committees.

King's campaigns have been a consistent recipient of PAC contributions from the U.S. Immigration Reform (USIR) PAC, which was originally the PAC of FAIR. Mrs. John Tanton is the President of this PAC, to which [she and her husband](#)<sup>26</sup> have been major financial contributors.

In 2008, Rep. King received [\\$1,000](#)<sup>27</sup> from USIR PAC. During the 2006 cycle, King Received [\\$2,000](#),<sup>28</sup> in 2004, he received [\\$1,000](#),<sup>29</sup> and in 2002, during his first election campaign, Rep. King received [\\$2,500](#).<sup>30</sup> Additionally, in 2006, King also received [\\$1,000](#)<sup>31</sup> from Minuteman PAC.

In total, King has received some \$7,500 from anti-immigrant PACs.

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Racial Profiling an “Inconvenience”**

According to an April 3, 2009 article in [Politico](#),<sup>32</sup> Rep. King dismissed the seriousness of sworn testimony detailing racial profiling by Latino witnesses at a Judiciary Committee hearing.

Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) told the Latino witnesses their plight paled in comparison to what had happened to Tranchant. “I don’t know how to impress to you what looks like an inconvenience to you compared to the very sacred life of this man’s daughter,” King said.

This is par for the course for King, who has dismissed critics from the National Council of La Raza – a nationally recognized civil rights organization. Said [King](#):<sup>33</sup> “They are a pro-Hispanic organization; I will call them a racist organization.”

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Minority Congressional Caucuses are "Separatist Groups"**

On April 30, 2009, Rep. King called the [Congressional Black Caucus](#) and the [Congressional Hispanic Caucus](#) “separatist groups” in a [speech](#) on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

King’s comments can be viewed [here](#).<sup>34</sup>

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Irish Immigrants Were Bad for the Republican Party**

According to a report published on [VDare.com](#),<sup>35</sup> King appeared on a panel to discuss the “immigration crisis” at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in March of 2007. The author writes that King shared the panel dais with Georgia State Senator Nancy Schaeffer and Chris Simcox of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps. King enunciated the potential political trouble that new immigrants could spell for the Republican party:

King spoke first and demonstrated an impressive command of the issue. He noted that illegal immigrants do a miniscule amount of work when you [take the entire economy](#)<sup>36</sup> into account. He denounced Republicans who support open borders for the cheap labor and liberals who support it for the votes. He explained that immigrants always [assimilate into the politics](#)<sup>37</sup> of where they settle, and told the members of the audience that if they didn’t believe him “**go look for an Irish Roman Catholic Republican in Boston.**” By the end, I couldn’t help but wonder if he read VDARE.COM.

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Decries President Obama’s Multicultural Heritage**

Think Progress reported that [King said](#)<sup>38</sup> of then Senator Barack Obama: "American patriotism is not imprinted on his mind or in his heart, because he wasn't raised as an American."

In March of 2008, during an interview with an Iowa radio station, Rep. King opined on Barack Obama's middle name, which he believed would have terrorists "[dancing in the streets...](#)".<sup>39</sup>

"I'll just say this that when you think about the optics of a Barack Obama potentially getting elected President of the United States -- and I mean, what does this look like to the rest of the world? What does it look like to the world of Islam?"

"And I will tell you that, if he is elected president, then the, the radical Islamists, the, the al-Qaida, and the radical Islamists and their supporters, will be dancing in the streets in greater numbers than they did on September 11...."

"It does matter, his middle name does matter. It matters because they read a meaning into that in the rest of the world, it has a special meaning to them. They will be dancing in the streets because of his middle name. They will be dancing in the streets because of who his father was and because of his posture that says: Pull out of the Middle East and pull out of this conflict."

### ➤ **Rep. Steve King: Supported by the Tanton Network of Anti-Immigrant Extremist Groups**

The mastermind of the anti-immigration movement is [John Tanton](#).<sup>40</sup>

The Center for Immigration Studies and NumbersUSA were started with Tanton's help and he founded FAIR. In addition, as noted above, Dr. Tanton and his wife are major donors to the anti-immigrant, U.S. Immigration Reform PAC. Tanton, who has long-standing and well-established ties to white nationalist groups, had a role in the creation all three groups -- and all of three groups' leaders worked for Tanton.

FAIR, the organization with which King seems most closely allied, has been designated an [anti-immigrant hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center](#).<sup>41</sup> [The SPLC](#)<sup>42</sup> recently issued [a report](#)<sup>43</sup> on Tanton and his ties to the anti-immigrant groups:

Three Washington, D.C. organizations most responsible for blocking comprehensive immigration reform in 2007 are part of a network of groups created by a man who has been at the heart of the white nationalist movement for decades, according to a report issued today by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Nativist Lobby: Three Faces of Intolerance [full report [here](#)]<sup>44</sup> describes how the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and NumbersUSA were founded and funded by John Tanton, a retired Michigan ophthalmologist who operates a racist publishing company and has written that to maintain American culture, "a European-American majority" is required.

"These groups have infiltrated the mainstream by presenting themselves as legitimate commentators, when, in reality, they were all conceived by a man who is convinced that non-white immigrants threaten America," said [Mark Potok](#),<sup>45</sup> director of the SPLC's Intelligence Project. "They have never strayed far from their roots."

The report examines how Tanton, who still sits on FAIR's board of directors, founded the racist Social Contract Press and has corresponded with Holocaust deniers, white nationalist intellectuals and Klan lawyers for decades — correspondence documented by his own writings stored at a University of Michigan library.

In a 2005 article on the Virginia Governor's race, [The Nation](#)<sup>46</sup> provided additional background on Tanton:

[GOP candidate] Kilgore's overt nativism has elicited support from the innocuous-sounding US Immigration Reform PAC, which donated \$2,000 to his campaign. The PAC is headed by Mary Lou Tanton, wife of John Tanton, a Michigan-based ophthalmologist the Southern Poverty Law Center [says](#)<sup>47</sup> has "either formed, led or otherwise made possible...the vast array of America's anti-immigration groups."

Tanton founded what is now the largest anti-immigration lobby in the country: the Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform (FAIR). Under his leadership, FAIR struck up a relationship with the [Pioneer Fund](#),<sup>48</sup> an organization dedicated to advancing the discredited pseudo-science of eugenics, and which promoted Nazi propaganda films during the 1930s. Between 1985 and 1994, the Pioneer Fund bankrolled FAIR with \$1.2 million.

Today, the Tanton's continue to ally themselves with racist figures and organizations. Just last year, US Immigration Reform PAC paid a far-right activist named Peter Gemma more than \$7,000 for consulting services. According to the Center for New Community, a Chicago-based civil rights group, Gemma has helped organize numerous Holocaust denial conferences, at which he has spoken alongside the likes of David Duke and fascist author David Irving. Gemma is the former media director for the [National Policy Institute](#),<sup>49</sup> an avowedly white nationalist think tank in Northern Virginia posing as the answer to the question it asks presumably white visitors to its website: "Who speaks for us?"

Congressman King's perspective on immigration is far from mainstream and embraced by some of the most extreme political advocates in America. However, Americans voted for immigration solutions that are both practical and which are in line with our core values. It is time for Congressional leaders from both parties to rise above the vitriol and division which has blocked comprehensive immigration reform for years and work together on real, practical solutions.

*Congressman Steve King represents the 5<sup>th</sup> district of Iowa. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the [5<sup>th</sup> district](#)<sup>50</sup> is one of the most homogenous districts in America. Out of a total population of 571,110, only an estimated 12,801 non-citizens (documented and undocumented) live in the district – a mere 2.2%. Nearly 97% of district residents over the age of 5 speak English exclusively or "very well." 499,592 only speak English in the home and 16,961 who speak a language other than English at home speak English "very well."*

## Citations:

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- <sup>9</sup> <http://firecoalition.com/projects/index.asp>
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.davidduke.com/>
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