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Wilder resolution welcomes immigrants into community

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WILDER — Wilder officials recently approved a resolution that affirms the city's multicultural nature, urges respect and acceptance of all people and welcomes immigrants to the community.

The resolution, approved by City Council and signed by Mayor John F. Bechtel in January, also criticizes "the failure of the U.S. Congress to enact responsible, sensible and humane immigration reform."

Bechtel said he does not advocate illegal immigration but believes the current system is broken.

"I don't think the resolution says we want illegals (to settle in Wilder); it says we want to welcome people and respect people," he said.

He uses the experience of his son, who met and married a woman during a two-year visit to the Philippines, as an example to demonstrate his objections to the system.

After two and a half years of paperwork, his son's wife of nine years and the couple's 4-year-old daughter still haven't

been able to join him in the U.S., Bechtel said.

"There's something drastically wrong with the system," he said. Watching a family member attempt to navigate the immigration process and observing others' difficulties during a charitable visit to Mexico fuel Bechtel's passion for the subject.

"Going through Tijuana and the barrios, I just have no idea why these people would ever want to leave that paradise," he said, sarcastically. "These people are living in shacks. ... I don't believe in illegal immigration in any way, shape or form, but I understand why people swim across rivers and walk across deserts to make their lives a little better."

Modern technology and information sharing technology make the lengthy, expensive process currently required inexcusable, Bechtel said. In the case of a worker who immigrates legally and wants to bring his or her mother into the country, "we're told it takes an average of 12 years plus I don't know how many dollars."

Wilder High School graduate Leo Morales, a community organizer with the Idaho Community Action Network, approached city officials to suggest the resolution.

"Wilder has a strong history as a bicultural community," Morales said. "The mayor has been very supportive of the principles of (the) Welcoming Idaho (Initiative)."

Nampa Mayor Tom Dale, a member of the Welcoming Idaho Committee, said the initiative set out to stress the hard work and contributions to the community of legal immigrants.

"There's kind of been a backlash in some ways" in the immigration debate that ignores legal immigrants' contributions, Dale said.

Morales said he, Bechtel and others were concerned by the "divisive" tone immigration discussion has taken.

"The politics of division, isolation and hate that are currently dominating the immigration conversation must end," the resolution states. "Idahoans, and all people, are deserving of a higher level of discourse that recognizes the basic equality that our country was founded on."

Comments:

66 After spending most of 1968 in Tijuana I also understand very well

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