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“Sanctuary! Sanctuary!”

By Justin M. Kiska

“Sanctuary! Sanctuary!” Any fan of classic literature should recognize that line from Victor Hugo’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. It’s the first thing that goes through my mind every time I hear someone talk about “sanctuary cities.” A little voice in the back of my head repeats Hugo’s line, making me smile for a minute. It’s probably a psychological coping mechanism. My mind tries to relax me because it knows how worked up I can get about the issue of sanctuary cities.

More often than not, I try to be a pragmatic, middle-of-the-road kind of thinker. I would rather find common ground so that something can be accomplished, rather than having two sides dig in on their extreme positions and nothing gets done. I know. To some, being a moderate is a bad thing. But it is what it is.

When it comes to sanctuary cities though, I find myself coming down very firmly on one side.

According to Wikipedia, a sanctuary city “is a city that limits its cooperation with the national government effort to enforce immigration law. Leaders of sanctuary cities want to reduce the fear of deportation and possible family break-up among people who are in the country illegally so that such people will be more willing to report crimes, use health and social services, and enroll their children in school.”

When you first read that, you think, okay, it isn’t that bad. Except for one little word . . . “illegally.” “... people who are in the country ILLEGALLY. . .”

Let’s take the issue of immigration out of the equation for the moment. That is a much broader conversation. And if lawmakers from the national level down can’t come up with meaningful immigration reform/policy, I certainly won’t be able to solve the problem in 800 words.

What I want to focus on is the fact there are cities, and counties, across the country led by elected officials that are openly breaking the law. These are individuals who stand up and swear to uphold the law, yet flagrantly defying it.

If a person has entered the United States illegally, they should not be protected by someone else breaking the law.

According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, hundreds of thousands of people become naturalized citizens of the United States each year. If so many are willing to follow the rules and go through the process legally, why should those who aren’t receive sanctuary? They are breaking our laws. Laws that we see by the number of people becoming citizens, many want to follow, believe in, and uphold.

It’s been reported that there are more than 300 state and local jurisdictions that have some form of “sanctuary policy” in place. The good news – this year thirty-three states have considered laws that would crackdown on such jurisdictions.

For a city or county to openly say they are going to disregard the law, they deserve to be punished for their actions. After that, if the residents of one of these sanctuary communities don't want to lose federal dollars or state assistance, then it is up to them to replace the elected officials who decided they were going to break the law.

Elected officials and those who put policies in place to create these sanctuary cities are just as criminal as those who break into our country illegally.

Do our immigration laws need to be reviewed and modernized? Yes. But until that happens, there are laws in place that must be followed – for those coming into the United States and for the officials that run state and local governments and agencies.