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## Calderón defends migration to U.S.

**Calls it 'socially, economically unavoidable'**

**By Howard Fischer**

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PUERTO PEÑASCO, Mexico — The president of Mexico vigorously defended the right of his countrymen to migrate to the United States, calling it "natural phenomenon" which is "socially and economically unavoidable."

And regardless of whether they arrive legally or not, they are entitled to be treated with dignity, Felipe Calderón told the governors of both U.S. and Mexican border states Thursday.

"I would also say it is advantageous for the United States' economy," Calderón said at the opening ceremonies of the annual Border Governors Conference. He said the two countries have "complementary economies."

"The U.S. economy is capital-intensive," the president said, while the economy of Mexico is labor-intensive.

To illustrate that point, he said it will be only a few years until there are 70 million retired U.S. citizens. At the same time, Calderón continued, most Mexicans are younger than 30.

He also rejected arguments that Mexican nationals are taking jobs from U.S. citizens.

"Mexican workers in the United States are a complement to workers, not a substitute," the president said. And aside from providing labor, "they pay taxes."

Even if Mexicans emigrating to the United States were not good for the U.S. economy, Calderón said that is not an excuse for abuse. "Mexican workers deserve dignified treatment," he said.

Calderón also told those in attendance, including business leaders and government officials, he has not given up trying to find economic opportunities to allow people in his country to work there. In fact, he said Mexico needs to do that to keep some of its best people at home.

"The most strong and daring people are those who migrate," he said. "They are willing to face death for the survival of their families."

But he said even more economic development in his country will not stop people from going to the United States to look for work. What he wants, Calderón said, is a situation where "immigration will be an option, not the only option."

Gov. Janet Napolitano agreed with much of what Calderón said, including the economic interdependence of the two countries. But she made it clear the need for foreign workers has to be met only through legal means.

"One of the problems that we have quite frankly is we need to lift the visa caps in the United States so that more legal immigration can occur," she said.

"There is always going to be legal migration between our countries," the governor continued. "But it does neither of our countries any good to have massive illegal immigration going back and forth."

While Napolitano repeated her call on the federal government to do more to secure the border, Calderón suggested the money to do that could be better spent elsewhere.

"A huge fence is not what will provide prosperity," he said. What is needed, he said, is investment.

"A mile of highway will do more to prevent immigration than a mile of fence in Sonora," Calderón said.

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