

## Questions to Consider About Group of Eight Immigration Proposal

Written by Grassley Press  
Monday, 15 April 2013 07:41

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Prepared Floor Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley

Ranking Member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary

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Thursday, April 11, 2013

Mr. President,

For months, members on both sides of the aisle have been working to find common ground on ways to fix our broken immigration system. This group has been meeting behind closed doors to forge a consensus on a very difficult topic. The group released a framework, or a document of principles, that would guide their negotiations. I cannot stress the importance of the first sentence in their preamble that states, "We will ensure that this is a successful permanent reform to our immigration system that will not need to be revisited." In other words, the group claimed to understand that we need a long-term solution to our immigration problems. That sentence is the most important part of their document, and as we work together on this issue,

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we must not lose sight of that goal.

In order to achieve that goal, we need to learn from our previous mistakes so that we truly don't have to revisit the problem. There is clear evidence that the 1986 amnesty program didn't solve our immigration problem, despite the intent of the law. Even though, for the first time ever, we made it illegal to knowingly hire or employ someone here illegally, illegal immigration soared because we rewarded the undocumented population. We set penalties to deter the hiring of people here illegally. Yet, an industry of counterfeiting and identity theft flourished and made a mockery of the law.

Unfortunately, the 1986 law didn't adequately provide for securing our borders or provide the tools to enforce the laws. Nor did it properly address the need to create or enhance the legal avenues for people to enter the country. The bill focused on legalizing millions of people here rather than creating a system that would work for generations to come.

So, I've made a point of trying to remind my colleagues that we must learn from the mistakes we made. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I have been adamant about making sure all members have an opportunity to review, analyze and debate the bill. Along with other members, we have asked for hearings. We have pressed the bipartisan group to work with us and ensure that we have a deliberative and healthy debate.

Unfortunately, this bipartisan group has failed to consult with many members of the Judiciary Committee, which has jurisdiction over immigration matters. They're working with the Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO. They're sharing language with K Street and interest groups. They are leaking details of their plans to certain media outlets. Yet, members of the Senate are forced to learn through these avenues about their negotiations. And, all along, the American people have been in the dark.

When the bill is unveiled, possibly next week, every member of the Senate will have questions. We'll comb through the details and determine if the proposal will truly fix the problems once and for all. So, allow me to share some of the questions I have. In an effort to ensure that the bill does what their framework insisted – that the problem be fixed once and for all – I will ask these questions when the bill is finally revealed to the public.

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- Is this bill enforcement first or legalization first?
  
- What is the expected cost? How will it be paid for?
  
- Will the bill ensure that undocumented immigrants don't get public benefits?
  
- Will the bill move us closer to a merit-based system?
  
- Will the bill be an avenue for labor unions to push Davis Bacon?
  - What are the concrete metrics used to measure border security?
  - Who will determine that these metrics are met? Will it be Congress, a commission, or a Secretary who doesn't think that the border matters?
  - Will the entry/exit system Congress mandated in 1996 finally be implemented? Will it be a part of the trigger?
  - Will the language be tight enough to prevent criminals, those with DUIs and other aggravated felonies from being eligible for legalization?
  - Will individuals already apprehended, or people in removal proceedings be eligible or even allowed to apply for the legalization program?
  - Will the bill ensure that the legalization program is covered by beneficiaries, and not taxpayers?
  - What will happen to individuals who do not come forward and register, or get provisional status?
  - What will happen if the border is never secured? What will be the consequences, including for those that have already received registered provisional status?
  - Will the agency in charge of immigration benefits be able to handle the additional workload while also preventing fraud and abuse?
  - Will the bill encourage cooperation between the federal government and state and locals to enforce the laws?
  - How will the bill ensure that ICE agents are allowed to do their job?
  - Will E-Verify be mandatory for all businesses? Will there be exceptions to the rule?
  - Will the bill require all businesses to use E-Verify now, or will it drag out the requirement even though it's ready to go nationwide?
  - Will the bill exempt or preserve state laws that require E-Verify?
  - What are the concessions to the unions and to the business community?
  - Will the new temporary worker program, which is a new model encompassing instant portability, truly work? How will employers be held responsible for the visa holders, if at all?

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- Is the new temporary worker program truly temporary? Will they get a special green card process?
- Will the bill exempt certain industries, like construction, from this new visa program?
- Will the 11 million people here illegally get priority in this new temporary worker program? Will they be able to use it?
- Will the bill require employers to first recruit and hire Americans?

Mr. President, we have a long road ahead of us to pass legislation to reform our immigration system. We'll have many more questions, and hopefully, a transparent and deliberative process to improve the bill. I look forward to working with my colleagues on this issue, and solving the problem once and for all.

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