



Lead Senate Immigration Hawks to Introduce Trump Immigration Plan as Bill

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Seven Republican senators are set to introduce a bill Monday night that would implement the White House's immigration plan, trading amnesty of 1.8 million illegal immigrants for border security, an end to the diversity visa lottery, and reforms to chain migration.

The Secure and Succeed Act of 2018 (SSA) is slated to be introduced as part of the Senate's open debate on immigration, which will see an as-of-yet uncertain number of plans introduced from all sides in an effort to see which bill can get to the sixty votes needed for passage. The debate is particularly pressing given the rapid approach of the March 5 deadline for the expiration of protections for illegal residents under the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Even if a plan passes the Senate, it will still need to clear the House of Representatives and get the signature of President Donald Trump, who has remained resolute in opposing proposals that do not implement the four-part plan the White House rolled out late last month.

"This is the only bill that has a chance of becoming law, and that's because it's the only bill that will truly solve the underlying problem," said Sen. Tom Cotton (R., Ark.), one of the bill's authors. "It will protect those eligible for DACA but also make sure we don't end up back here five years from now."

Cotton is one of several Senate immigration hawks backing the SSA. Others include Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn (R., Texas), Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R., Iowa), and David Perdue (R., Ga.), who is Cotton's cosponsor on the RAISE Act, which aims to transition the United States to an economic-merit-based immigration regime.

The SSA does not implement Cotton and Perdue's RAISE proposal, sticking primarily to the terms of the White House's four-pillar plan. It promises a permanent solution to illegal residents who have received protection under DACA, which applied to those individuals who immigrated to the United States as minors. Some 1.8 million people, including the 800,000 recipients of DACA and one million who would have been eligible but did not apply, will be given a twelve-year path to citizenship, with a two year credit for DACA enrollees.

In order to qualify for citizenship, would-be beneficiaries need to obtain a high school diploma or GED; pass criminal background and "good moral character" checks; and either serve in the military, pursue a degree, or maintain a full-time job.

"This legislation is a reasonable approach to shielding children illegally brought to our country through no fault of their own while also taking the meaningful steps to ensure nobody finds themselves in the same situation in the future," Sen. Grassley said.

In exchange for the eventual legalization, the SSA would implement several Trump administration priorities. That includes ending the so-called diversity lottery, which gives some 55,000 visas every year to applicants from countries that are otherwise underrepresented in immigration patterns. Those visas would be reallocated to clearing the existing immigration backlogs, which topped 780,000 applicants as of October 2017.

Notably, those visas would not be allocated to address residents currently in the country under the Temporary Protected Status program, a proposal some Senators considered after the administration announced it was ending protected status for some 200,000 currently resident Salvadorans.

The SSA would also change the structure of extended family migration law, ending chain migration by parents, siblings, and adult children of current residents. Such migration cumulatively made up 61 percent of all immigration between 1981 and 2016.

The SSA would grandfather in those currently waiting to immigrate under the pre-existing family migration rules. It would also extend renewable, five-year visas to parents of U.S. citizens, a policy presumably meant to apply to the parents of eventually legalized DACA recipients.

Recent analyses from the Cato Institute and Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) suggested that the implementation of this policy would ultimately reduce immigration levels by 33 to 44 percent.

Lastly, the SSA would substantially increase funding and policy support for border security, including establishing a \$25 billion trust fund for border security, which may or may not include a physical border wall. It would further add border patrol and immigration enforcement agents, enact Kate's Law, and permanently authorize voluntary E-verify, among other changes.

The SSA is likely to be one of a number of proposals floated Monday night. Other bills include a stripped down amnesty-for-security bill from Sens. John McCain (R., Ariz.) and Chris Coons (D., Del.), and the 2017 version of the perennial DREAM Act from Sens. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.) and Dick Durbin (D., Ill.).