



## **GOP Leaders Bear-Hug The Trump Immigration Plan As Negotiations Sputter**

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As the deadline for a deal on immigration draws closer, a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers with the unfortunate name “the Number Twos” has been meeting almost daily to negotiate a solution that would protect young immigrants known as Dreamers.

But their first meeting since President Trump unveiled his immigration proposal, which includes billions of dollars to build more walls on the U.S.-Mexico border and deep cuts to several forms of legal immigration, yielded no tangible progress. Though rank-and-file House Republicans and conservative groups have blasted the White House plan as “amnesty” and a violation of Trump’s campaign promises, the GOP leaders attending the meeting of the seconds-in-command from each party in each chamber (hence, the “Number Twos”) had nothing but praise for the proposal.

“I feel like the president has been extraordinarily generous, surprisingly so, in terms of the relief offered to the DACA recipients,” Senate Republican Whip John Cornyn (R-TX) told reporters, referring to the plan’s pathway to citizenship for 1.8 million immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children. “It just seems to me that it would be very disappointing to them, and to all of us, for them to fail to take advantage of this opportunity to provide permanent relief for them, while we do some other important things that need to be done, like secure the border, like plow more green cards back into the waiting list rather than just keep going on with collateral family-based immigration.”

Though a key provision in the deal cut in the Senate to end the government shutdown was a promise from GOP leaders to hold a vote on an immigration deal whether President Trump supports it or not, Republicans now say that they are “by definition” working off the President’s framework.

“I know the Democrats would like to take the DACA piece and forget the rest, but we’re not going to do that,” Cornyn said. “The White House says there are four pillars, and I think we have to come up with a solution that addresses all four.”

Cornyn's counterpart in the House, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), was more tight-lipped exiting the meeting, only telling reporters: "The president laid out a very good start."

The Democratic leaders maintain that the White House plan is "a nonstarter," particularly its provisions banning all family-based immigration other than spouses and minor children and eliminating the diversity visa lottery—changes that would slash legal immigration by at least 44 percent, according to the Cato Institute.

Asked what he thinks of the White House framework, Steny Hoyer (D-MD) quipped to reporters: "Not much."

Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) called the cuts to family-based immigration "one of the most serious problems in the Republican proposal."

"The strength of American families has been a pillar of our country for as long as I can remember," he said. "To limit family unification and to literally divide families from their children is inconsistent with the values I thought both parties embraced."

Trump's plan would result in 22 million fewer people immigrating legally to the U.S. over the next 50 years, with both citizens and permanent residents no longer able to sponsor their parents, grandparents, adult children, siblings, and other relatives. But Cornyn insisted Monday that the plan, by reallocating visas to address the current processing waitlist, is actually pro-family.

"One way I look at it is that we could use those green cards to move families into the country faster rather than keep them in this decade, sometimes two-decade-long backlog," he said. "We could actually unify families. To me that sounds like a pretty good idea."

All of the meeting's participants told reporters that no progress was made on even the outlines of the deal, but that the group will continue to meet this week.

"So far, nothing has come from these meetings other than another meeting," grumbled Durbin. "What 'does border security' mean? Did we agree on a definition of the wall? No. An amount for border security? No. We're still at the earliest stages."