

Sessions, Schumer debate ‘Gang of 8’ immigration efforts

By: Jeff Poor – March 14, 2013

On Sunday’s broadcast of ABC’s “This Week with George Stephanopoulos,” Alabama Republican Sen. Jeff Sessions and New York Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer faced off over the so-called “Gang of Eight” immigration proposal that is scheduled to be introduced in the Senate next week.

Earlier in the broadcast, “Gang of Eight” member junior Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio appeared to make his case for the legislation. But Sessions explained why he was skeptical of those efforts.

“I know Sen. Rubio’s heart is exactly right,” Sessions said. “And I really respect the work of the gang of eight. But they have produced legislation, it appears — although it looks like now it may be another week before we see it, that will give amnesty now, legalize everyone that’s here effectively today and then there’s a promise of enforcement in the future. Even if you pass laws today that appear to be effective, it doesn’t mean they’re going to be enforced. And we have in this administration, a failure to enforce. So that’s a big deal right now.”

But Schumer disagreed with the “amnesty” charge. He told fill-in host Jon Karl he was hopeful the differences would be ironed out and the process would be proceed.

“No, not at all,” Schumer said. “This is a very balanced bill. The American people have told us to do two things. One, prevent future flows of illegal immigration and then, come up with a common sense solution for legal immigration. And that’s what our bill does. You know, we’ve worked long and hard on this so, we’re very, very close. Every major — every significant disagreement among the eight of us is resolved. And I expect we will — the eight of us will introduce a bill on Tuesday. Obviously, there have been problems.”

Later in the segment, the two had an exchange over the economic benefits, one which Sessions charged should have been revealed in hearings on the Gang of Eight’s effort.

Transcript as follows:

KARL: So, let me ask you, Sen. Sessions, you have said there are just too many unanswered questions about what this does. You put out a bunch of them. You have got one of the principal architects of this compromise right here. Fire away. What’s your question?

SESSIONS: Well, I would ask Sen. Schumer this: If this legislation is established by reputable economists as pulling down the wages of already suffering low-wage American workers, will you continue to push for it?

SCHUMER: The bottom line, that’s not going to happen, Jeff.

SESSIONS: Well, you have to read the statistics. You didn’t have hearings with

these top economists who studied this over the years publicly, to determine the impact. And they say it will have that impact, as do the civil rights commission members.

SCHUMER: First of all — let me just answer. First of all, it's very logical, right now, who's pulling down wage rates? Illegal people who cross the border and will work, because they're illegal and have no protections, for much less than Americans will work for.

Second, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, one of the most conservative true blue economists said this will raise wages and increase GDP. Cato Institute, people who you usually agree with, Jeff, say this is going to be a shot in the arm for our economy because we'll take people in who will create jobs and prevent people who are coming in from lowering wages and taking away American jobs. It's such a logical approach. It's logical...

SESSIONS: Well, it's logical that if you bring in a massive supply of low-wage workers, you're going to pull the workers down.

SCHUMER: They're already here, though, aren't they?

SESSIONS: Well, you're talking about almost doubling the...

SCHUMER: That's the point, isn't it?

SESSIONS: You're bringing in huge more numbers of legal workers, Chuck. And the ag people that you've been listening to are getting what they want, others are getting what they want.