



House GOP Weighs Requiring Undocumented Immigrants To Purchase Health Insurance

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Some House Republicans are looking at requiring undocumented immigrants who apply for a path to citizenship to buy their own health insurance while they wait for legal status, according to Politico.com.

The House, where Republicans have a majority, is working on legislation that would reform the immigration system. The Senate, which has a Democratic majority, has already introduced an immigration reform bill that addresses stricter enforcement and a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants, among other things.

The Republicans have opposed Obama's health care reform plan, saying, among other things, that they object to its requirement that people have health insurance. They say having a mandate for undocumented immigrants would ensure that they don't become public charges.

"We're dealing with a very specific circumstance and a very specific group of folks," Politico.com quoted Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.), a member of the House immigration group, as saying. "There are going to be requirements that are not required for everyone else."

Diaz-Balart said that Americans would be supportive of a pathway to legalization for undocumented immigrants "if they're not a public charge."

"It's individual responsibility for these folks to earn their ability to stay in the United States, to work in the United States, and to be legalized in the United States, and a big part of that has to be that they're not a public charge," he said.

But some conservative groups have misgivings about the requirement for undocumented immigrants, Politico.com said.

The "groups that support immigration reform think the contradiction is so glaring— no mandate for citizens, but one for immigrants — that Republicans should rethink their position," the story said.

Alex Nowrasteh of the Cato Institute, one of the leading advocates of immigration reform

on the right, said “that is virtually the opposite of the main point they made against Obamacare.”

“It’s totally reasonable to make sure you don’t expand the welfare state, but there’s no need to do that by imposing a discredited, Obama-style individual mandate,” said Nowrasteh. “I think it’s such a glaring and obvious contradiction that they’ll have to drop it.”

Obama’s health care plan excludes undocumented immigrants.

“We want them to have health care, not Obamacare,” Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Texas), another member of the group, said to Politico.com.

Grover Norquist, a conservative and president of Americans for Tax Reform, told Politico.com that Republicans can explain their seemingly conflicting positions on mandating health insurance for the undocumented – but not for all Americans – by portraying it as a way to earn legal status.

“You have to do X in order to get Y,” Norquist said.

A bipartisan bill in the Senate drafted by the so-called “Gang of Eight” – four Republicans and four Democrats – precludes undocumented immigrants from getting Obama health care subsidies.

But, Politico.com pointed out, “it says they could buy insurance through the health insurance exchanges with their own money.”

House Democrats aren’t convinced a mandate on undocumented immigrants and health insurance is realistic.

“You can’t ask somebody to buy something they can’t afford, then deny them the ability to get any help,” said Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), one of the main authors of the health care law, according to Politico.com.