



Quotes of the day

February 21, 2013

Immigration reform's chances in the House are looking bleaker after one of the top Republicans tasked with shepherding a bill to passage ruled out a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), chair of the Judiciary Committee that will mark up any House legislation on the issue, told NPR this week that he will not support a bill that eventually grants citizenship for the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in America.

“People have a pathway to citizenship right now: It’s to abide by the immigration laws, and if they have a family relationship, if they have a job skill that allows them to do that, they can obtain citizenship,” Goodlatte said. “But simply someone who broke the law, came here, [to] say, ‘I’ll give you citizenship now,’ that I don’t think is going to happen.”

Key senators are exploring an immigration bill that would force every U.S. worker—citizen or not—to carry a high-tech identity card that could use fingerprints or other personal markers to prove a person’s legal eligibility to work...

“I subscribe to the ‘if you build it, they will come’ school of regulation,” said Chris Calabrese of the American Civil Liberties Union, who said he worried that the card would be required to board airplanes, to vote or perhaps purchase a firearm. “It becomes in essence a permission slip to do all of the ordinary things that are your rights as an American,” he said.

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration-policy expert at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, said: “It’s not only a gross violation of individual privacy, it’s an enormously high-cost policy that will have an incredibly low to negligible benefit.”

“I’m not optimistic about common sense immigration reform passing this Congress,” Cruz said during a speech at the Dallas Texas Tool & Die company. “I don’t believe President Obama wants an immigration bill to pass, instead I think he wants a political issue. His objective is to push so much on the table that he forces Republicans walk away from the table because then he wants to use that issue in 2014 and 2016 as a divisive wedge issue.”...

“The president has been focusing on amnesty, a path to citizenship that skips ahead of the line,” Cruz said. “That, he knows, is a position not supported by a great many Americans and not a position that will achieve bi-partisan cooperation. It’s designed to scuttle the bill.”

[O]n the single most important issue — instant amnesty — there is no real difference between the proposals.

Rubio calls it “probationary legal status.” Obama uses the term “lawful prospective immigrant.” But both would instantly legalize the 11 million illegal immigrants living here today. The moment either bill is signed, the 11 million become eligible for legal residence, the right to work, and relief from the prospect of deportation.

Their life in the shadows is over, which is what matters to them above all. Call the status probationary or prospective, but, in reality, it is permanent. There is no conceivable circumstance (short of criminality) under which the instant legalization would be revoked.

This is bad policy. It repeats the 1986 immigration reform that legalized (the then) 3 million while promising border enforcement — which was never carried out. Which opened the door to today’s 11 million. And to the next 11 million as soon as the ink is dry on this reform...

Regrettably, there appears to be zero political will to undertake this kind of definitive solution. Democrats have little real interest in border enforcement. They see a rising Hispanic population as the key to a permanent Democratic majority. And Republicans are so panicked by last year’s loss of the Hispanic vote by 44 points that they have conceded instant legalization, as in the Rubio proposal.

Amnesty never shows up in polls as a top concern of Hispanics. It’s a top concern of employers, not workers — which isn’t going to do much to help Republicans shed that “Party of the Rich” image. After Reagan signed an amnesty bill in 1986, unemployment among Hispanics skyrocketed when, suddenly, there was increased competition for low-skill jobs. That’s precisely why businesses want amnesty, not because of their deep concern for the plight of the underclass...

So why do Hispanics vote Democratic? Like most legal immigrants since Teddy Kennedy’s 1965 Immigration Act, Hispanic immigrants are poor. The poverty rate of second-generation Hispanics is lower than the first — but the third generation’s poverty rate is higher than the second...

If Republicans think we can have mass amnesty for millions of government-dependent immigrants and become a more libertarian country, they’re crazy.

This isn't because of a failure to "reach out." Republicans can't beat Democrats at the government assistance game. From single mothers to corporate subsidy-takers, they want your money and the Democrats promise to give it to them.

Understanding English is supposedly a precondition for gaining U.S. citizenship. Why, then, is it even necessary for politicians to address voters in Spanish? Either their English skills are not what we have been led to believe, or they simply prefer to use Spanish. Neither possibility is reassuring.

There appears to be no similar stampede of candidates, including Hispanic politicians, beating down the doors of Chinese or Korean Berlitz schools to communicate better with their Asian constituents. The assumption is: Asians and other immigrants will learn English; Hispanics, on the other hand, need to be reached in Spanish. The relative size of the various populations is no excuse: if using someone's native or legacy language is appropriate and respectful for one language group, why shouldn't the practice extend to all groups?...

Pro-amnesty conservatives regularly assert that assimilation is proceeding wonderfully, because most second- and third-generation Hispanics allegedly understand English. Is Spanish spreading, then, because the arrival of even more immigrants speaking only Spanish overwhelms this progress, or because Hispanic-Americans themselves prefer Spanish? Again, neither possibility is reassuring...

Conservatives have traditionally stressed the unum rather than the pluribus in our national motto (which originally referred to the unification of the states into a single nation, not to our contemporary notion of "diversity"). If the reality on the ground looks more and more like "E pluribus duo," shouldn't we care?

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, one of a handful of Senators who have been working on bipartisan legislation on immigration, has already floated the possibility of walking away from the negotiating table if the terms of a deal aren't acceptable. The political risks of leaving the issue unresolved are significant for a party that won just one in four Hispanic voters in 2012. If the negotiations broke off permanently, Republicans would have to quickly embark on a public relations campaign blaming Obama for making unreasonable demands and playing politics with the issue. (And, yes, that sound a lot like what Cruz is doing right now.) Winning a message battle on immigration could be complicated by some of the louder voices — Iowa Rep. Steve King, for example — who are long time opponents of any sort of immigration compromise...

Rubio — and other smart party strategists — know that if a deal can't be reached on immigration, Republicans' chances of winning the White House in 2016 decrease...

Given the stakes, Republicans — Cruz included — had better hope that Obama's eye is more on building his legacy than on positioning his party politically for when he leaves

office. Otherwise, the GOP could be faced with nothing but bad choices on the issue heading into the 2014 midterms and 2016 presidential election.