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Amnesty For Immigrants 2013? 4 Fast Facts About The US Anti-Amnesty Movement That Is Facing Tough Odds

By: David Iaconangelo – May 28, 2013

As the Senate "Gang of Eight" immigration bill passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee last week, to be debated on the floor in June, anti-amnesty groups are hoping for a repeat of 2007, when conservative talk show hosts and organizations helped shoot down a comprehensive plan for immigration reform. This time, however, those who oppose offering a path to citizenship for the undocumented can count on support from considerably smaller array of advocacy groups: the "Gang of Eight" proposal has garnered support from labor unions as powerful as the AFL-CIO as well as many immigration advocates and civil liberties organizations like the ACLU, all of which had opposed the 2007 bill. Similarly, conservative and libertarian think tanks like the American Action Forum, the Cato Institute, the Kemp Foundation and Americans for Tax Reform have signaled their support of the reform on for economic reasons and criticized a Heritage Foundation study estimating the cost of amnesty to be \$6.3 trillion over 50 years.

Here are four fast facts about the current anti-amnesty movement.

1. They've got their own "gang of eight."

ABC News reported earlier this month that eight House Republicans have banded together against the comprehensive immigration reform bill. Two of them have already made names for themselves through controversial comments: Rep. Steve King of Iowa -- who recently lamented that undocumented DREAMers at a House hearing on immigration could not be arrested by immigration agents present -- and Rep. Louie Gohmert of Texas, who in April told CSPAN, "We know Al-Qaeda has camps on the Mexican border" and added, "We have people that are trained to act Hispanic when they are radical Islamists." These representatives staunchly oppose any provision in the bill that would give any undocumented residents of the U.S. a path to citizenship -- the central part of the reform -- though they are active campaigners for increased border security and often on checks on work eligibility.

2. The Heritage Foundation's study on the cost of immigration reform has been regularly cited by them.

Other conservative think tanks have said the study is "misleading" because it did not make use of "dynamic scoring," a quantitative tool which factors in the productive

behavior of economic actors affected by a given piece of economic policy -- in other words, that it did not calculate the ways in which legalization might boost immigrants' economic contributions to society.

3. On the issue of amnesty, they've got an uphill battle against public opinion.

Some 66 percent of voters favor a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants currently in the United States who pass background checks and pay back taxes, according to a FOX poll. Conversely, about one in five favor deportation for the undocumented; 50 percent think amnesty will help the economy -- compared to 40 percent who think it won't.

4. Three longtime anti-illegal-immigration groups are still at the center of efforts.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), NumbersUSA, and the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) have helped drive the "Remember 1986" campaign, whose name refers to the 1986 reform that gave amnesty to millions of undocumented immigrants without significantly modifying paths to legal immigration or border security. All three of these groups were nurtured by John Tanton, an environmentalist who started his anti-immigration push out of a conviction that human population control was a necessity for environmental conservation. Republicans like Marco Rubio have tried to discredit these groups by pointing out their association with Tanton and with other population-control groups which back abortion and even sterilization.

The groups say they are victims of a smear campaign and guilt-by-association arguments meant to distract from their contributions to public discourse on immigration.