

# National Journal

## 5 Roadblocks to Immigration Reform

*Even with bipartisan support in the Senate, immigration reform could stumble on its way through Congress.*

By: Michael Catalini – April 15, 2013

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Florida Sen. Marco Rubio appeared on all seven Sunday news shows to pitch the Gang of Eight immigration reform plan that will be unveiled this week.

For the first time since Congress' 2007 efforts to fix immigration, reform advocates are facing the very real prospect of passing bipartisan legislation. As the most public face of immigration reform advocates, Rubio made the case for the proposal on national television this weekend, offering cover to conservatives by arguing that a pathway to citizenship is not amnesty.

The Gang is expected to unveil its legislation this week and while supporters are cautiously optimistic, there are also plenty of reasons to be skeptical. Here is a look at five roadblocks immigration legislation could face.

1) Conservatives are worried about border security enforcement and the cost of reform. "Everyone understands that any proposal without real border security and robust interior enforcement is unacceptable to the American people," wrote GOP Rep. Lamar Smith of Texas in *Politico* today. Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama worried that immigration reform would be useless without federal enforcement. "And we have in this administration a failure to enforce," he said on ABC's *This Week*. There is also a concern about the costs associated with immigration reform, with a lively debate on the right between the Heritage Foundation, which argues reform will be costly because of the federal government benefits immigrants could receive, and the Cato Institute and American Action Forum, which argue reform could boost per capita GDP.

Rubio preemptively made the case on the Sunday shows that such estimates are unreliable because they don't factor in the economic growth that immigrants' work provides the country. "Conservatives love dynamic scoring, which [is] a complicated way of saying you look at a budget issue not just for the costs but for the benefits associated with it," Rubio said on *Fox News Sunday*. "All I'm asking for is that for this plan to be reviewed through that standard - the same conservative dynamic scoring that we apply to tax cuts."

2) Congressional hearings could expose problematic provisions with a lengthy bill. That's why some senators supportive of immigration reform want to speed the legislation through committee. That's also why some House Republicans want the bill to go through regular order, which means the bill would work its way through the committee process and a number of hearings. House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte of Virginia made the case on Sunday that any reform legislation should go through this lengthier process. Meanwhile, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy of Vermont announced a hearing for this week, a move some Senate Republicans said amounts to rushing the proposal through the legislative process.

For his part, Rubio released a statement Monday afternoon declaring his support for a transparent process to allow all parties to review the bill. "As we go forward in this immigration debate, we need more openness and transparency that I firmly believe will only help improve this bill and earn the public's confidence that it will truly establish the strongest border security and enforcement measures in U.S. history, modernize our immigration system to help create more jobs for Americans, and deal with our undocumented population in a tough but fair way," Rubio said in a statement.

3) President Obama's support of any plan could cost Republican support in both chambers of Congress. The president has been conspicuously silent about immigration reform lately, primarily offering support for the overall process but remaining silent on the details. But once the legislation is released, he's bound to weigh in. That could prove toxic for many House Republicans, conservative senators, and a handful of red-state Democratic senators facing reelection in 2014 because of Obama's unpopularity in their states.

4) The tea party caucus in the House is already fuming. Rep. Steve King of Iowa is meeting with other conservative members, who are frustrated the Senate-brokered deal will not reflect their input. "The meetings of the Gang of Eight and the secret meetings in the House of Representatives — the people who have been standing up for the Constitution and the rule of law haven't been invited to those meetings," King said, according to *National Review*. This suggests there will be loud opposition from conservative opponents, and if history is any indication, that would make a bill tougher to pass in the Republican-controlled House.

5) GOP senators aren't sold yet on the proposal either. Sessions called the bill bad for U.S. workers and made an economic case against the bill. "It's logical that if you bring in a massive supply of low-wage workers, you're going to pull the workers down," Sessions said on ABC's *This Week*. Meanwhile, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas worries about the fairness of a path to citizenship, which he suggested is unfair to the many immigrants who came to the U.S. legally. "It worries me, even if someone goes to the back of the line," Cruz said on Fox News. "It means you're a chump for having stayed in your own country and followed the rules."