



## **Opponents of immigration reform sticking to their guns**

Immigration reform advocates are still pushing Congress to pass legislation before the year ends, but opponents believe current legislative proposals will hurt Americans.

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Several new efforts to push immigration reform through the House of Representatives by end of year have supporters once again rallying behind the stalled legislation, including a large demonstration last week at the National Mall in which eight congressmen were arrested.

Also last week, Evangelical Christians announced their “Pray 4 Reform” campaign urging Congress to pass a bill for moral reasons.

At the beginning of 2013, the future for immigration reform seemed assured. After the Senate passed the bill, it stalled in the House and has only continued to stagnate as other issues ranging from Syria to the partial government shutdown grabbed headlines.

While supporters are mounting a new effort to push legislation through before the year ends, opponents are sticking their guns.

Problems with passage in Congress hinge on the opposition of many members, especially House Republicans, to what they call amnesty -- the question of offering citizenship to those who entered the country illegally.

As it is currently laid out in the stalled legislation, an overhaul of the immigration system in the U.S. would create a “pathway to citizenship” for the millions of undocumented people living in the country. This is exactly what Dan Holler, spokesman of the conservative Heritage Action for America, finds issue with.

“Any sort of immigration reform plans that includes amnesty is going to be a nonstarter. It’s not a fair thing to do.”

According to Pew Research Center numbers, nearly 12 million undocumented people live in the United States. Holler said the pathway to citizenship would be unfair because it benefits immigrants who have entered the U.S. illegally and have broken rules to remain here.

Policy experts who oppose the immigration legislation provided other opinions why they believe such reform is not in the best interests of Americans.

“It has a detrimental effect on Americans who are job seekers,” said Kristen Williamson, spokeswoman for the conservative Federation of American Immigration Reform. “Twenty-two million Americans are employed or underemployed.”

Americans looking for work should be the priority for members of Congress who are not elected to represent the interests of foreign workers, according to Williamson.

Williamson further said “illegal aliens” have broken the law and should be held accountable, as citizens would be.

“Enforcement and technology to track people when they come and when they leave are not being utilized properly,” Holler said about border security. “Then, maybe in 10 years, we can deal with the folks that are here illegally.”

Williamson from FAIR agreed the borders must be made more secure. Citing an alleged uptick in the number of undocumented people living in the United States since the recession, Williamson posed a question:

“The Obama administration claims they are doing a lot of enforcement and the borders are secure so why is illegal immigration increasing?”

However, Alex Nowrasteh, a senior policy expert from the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, defended the Senate-passed bill.

“It’s a step in the right direction, but it’s not perfect and there are problems with it.”

Unlike other opponents, Nowrasteh believes immigration could be good for the economy. He said an unrealistic notion of legislation getting passed is actually holding back reform:

“There’s a fairytale notion that any bill that passes through the House will conference with the Senate bill and we’ll just end up with the Senate bill in a few months after the conference committee.”

Passing legislation is a time-consuming process for both sides, and Nowrasteh predicted Americans won’t see reform by the end of the year.

“It’s looking less likely as time goes on.”