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- [Brent Budowsky](#)
- [Lanny Davis](#)
- [John Del Cecato](#)
- [Ben Goddard](#)
- [David Hill](#)
- [Cheri Jacobus](#)
- [David Keene](#)
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THE HILL'S Congress Blog

Where lawmakers come to blog

The Big Question: Will the Senate tackle immigration this year?

By Sydelle Moore - 04/14/10 11:35 AM ET

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Some of the nation's top political commentators, legislators and intellectuals offer insight into the biggest question burning up the blogosphere today.

Today's question:

What are the chances that the Senate will tackle immigration reform this year?

Some background reading [here](#).

Bill Press, host of the "Bill Press Show" and a contributor to The Hill's Pundits Blog, said:

I'd like to see them do it, I think the country needs it, but — with Wall Street reform, a Supreme Court vacancy, and midterm elections — I don't believe there's a realistic chance the Senate will tackle immigration reform this year.

A.B. Stoddard, associate editor and columnist at The Hill, said:

It's easy to see why immigration reform is a top priority for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and easy to see why the president himself has continued talking it up. But it's difficult to see anything passing this year. Tomorrow we are half way through April, and members have roughly three and a half months left of legislating in this session before departing for recess and campaigning in August. The administration, along with Democratic leaders in Congress, have decided on a political and legislative push of passing financial services regulation and a package of bills designed to mitigate the effects of a recent Supreme Court decision (*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*) allowing corporate and labor money to flow into the election process as never before. Their hope is to paint Republicans, should they oppose reform and election disclosure requirements, as defenders of Wall Street and big business who are standing in the way of economic improvement on Main Street. The Democrats are exhausted after the health care reform battle, which thus far has not improved their standing in public opinion polls. They remain divided over deficits and how soon they should be addressed and may not be able to pass a budget blueprint this year because of election year politics. Senators are

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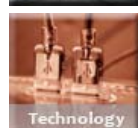
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working on a new energy and climate bill, members are working in both chambers to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, and indeed Sens. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) have co-sponsored a pragmatic, centrist immigration plan. Doesn't mean any of it will get done this year.

Brandon Arnold, Director of Government Affairs at The Cato Institute, said:

Despite promises from Congressional leadership and the White House to Hispanic lawmakers, it seems highly unlikely that Congress will pass comprehensive immigration reform this year.

While some would like to blame this on other legislative priorities – namely a Supreme Court nominee and financial services regulatory overhaul – the real culprit is the political landscape. With an important election on the horizon, most moderate Democrats want to avoid controversial votes that would further mobilize the already seething conservative base. This same dynamic is forcing leadership to back away from passing a budget resolution, but is particularly acute on immigration because of the high unemployment rate – currently hovering around 10 percent. House leadership has already seen the writing on the wall and wisely insisted that the Senate act first.

Politically, that makes a great deal of sense. The spirit of bipartisanship on immigration in the lower chamber was damaged long before the health care bill passed. In 2007, Congressional Hispanic Caucus opted to go its way and scrap the bipartisan STRIVE Act, which included an essential component to comprehensive reform – a guest worker program for low-skilled labor.

Justin Raimondo, editorial director of Antiwar.com, said:

Considering how politically tone deaf the Democratic leadership is -- witness their ploughing ahead on healthcare "reform," in spite of rising popular indignation at the creation of an insurance cartel -- I wouldn't be at all surprised if they next took up the even more volatile issue of immigration "reform."

Damon N. Spiegel, entrepreneur and writer, said:

I suspect the Senate will tackle immigration this year but tackling doesn't mean success in reform. While we all know immigration reform is an issue in this country the politicians won't touch this till after the November elections. A strong debate on reform will mobilize the Republican party even more than it has during the Healthcare debate. While some might see the Republicans as anti-Latin, anti-immigration the reality is if the Economy does not recovery and the job landscape does not improve the GOP will be able to use this bill as a method to propagate that this bill will actually mean 'job creation'. In this time of despair and economic disaster should it be time that we as a nation started to build and buy in American buy services and products that are created by Citizens of America. Is that really too much to ask? Is it really that outrageous?

Are we racists and bigots by simply asking the people of this country to follow the law of the land?

John F. McManus, president of the John Birch Society, said:

Chances are very good - and very scary - that Congress will seek new immigration legislation.



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Harry Reid already has a bill in the Senate. He says its goal is to help the economy and take care of "other purposes." Like other measures being planned, he wants to add millions of illegals to the voting rolls so they'll vote for his agenda.

In the House, Gutierrez (D-Ill.) and Ortiz (D-Texas) have a bill with 94 co-sponsors calling for "comprehensive" immigration reform. Comprehensive to these people means amnesty. Every time there's amnesty (there should never be such excusing of law breaking), it means more will flood across the border.

Also, Senators Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Graham (R-S.C.) are cobbling together a bill that will include amnesty and require an ID card for all workers (illegal and legal). They too want to add millions to the voting rolls. This is bipartisan treachery.

Momentum from the passage of the healthcare monstrosity will be relied upon by President Obama to get one of these damaging proposals enacted. Americans should emphatically say NO.

Answers to the legal immigration problem are already on the books. It is against the law to hire an illegal immigrant. Enforce the law! It is the constitutionally assigned task of the federal government (see Article IV, Section 4) to "protect the [states] against invasion." Not just a military invasion, any invasion. And 12-20 million illegal immigrants is an invasion. The federal government is not doing its duty.

Eliseo Medina of the SEIU has stated that he wants to see millions of illegal entrants added to the voting rolls so that they will support "our issues." His issues amount to more government and socialism. There are already millions of illegals fraudulently voting.

The costs of illegal immigrant are huge: economically, politically and culturally. Massive immigration led to the demise of the Roman Empire in the 4th Century. Have we learned nothing from history?

Eliseo Medina, executive vice president of SEIU, said:

Because of Washington's failure to act over decades, the same U.S. economy

that has been built on an unsustainable bubble of reckless risk and short-term profit schemes has also been built on the cheap labor of unauthorized workers. The result? These workers—many of whom have lived and worked in the U.S. for decades—are easily exploited, which drives down wages and standards for all of us.

As we get to work in the critical months ahead, there is no question that creating quality jobs and restoring economic fairness must be our top priorities. But as it becomes increasingly clear, none of these goals can be achieved over the long-term unless we get serious about fixing an outdated, unenforceable and increasingly costly broken immigration system.

Simply put: we can't build a strong economy on top of a broken immigration system. We cannot restore fairness to U.S. workers or build stability in the labor market until we eliminate today's underground economy of undocumented workers. We cannot restore America's greatness until we build an immigration system equipped to deal with the economy of our future.

Until we fix this deep-rooted problem, the same bad actors who brought us to the brink of economic collapse will continue to game the system for their own

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economic gain. Taxpayers who pay their full and fair share will be undercut by workers and employers who do not. Employers who pay decent wages, offer good benefits, and follow all the rules will be weakened by unprincipled employers.

Like fiscal reform, healthcare reform and our expansion into a clean energy economy—shortcuts and band-aid approaches to immigration reform bear no real fruit. Estimated to cost well over \$200 billion, the act of deporting 12 million people is a logistical impossibility that the vast majority of Americans do not support. Likewise, border and workplace enforcement without broader reform is a waste of taxpayer money that has failed time and time again.

Instead, every day that Washington fails to deliver a real solution, we will continue to see a rise in hate crimes, heightened fears and growing divisions in our communities. This is not the path to restore America's greatness.

On the other hand, we do have another choice. Comprehensive immigration reform—getting undocumented immigrants into the system and under the rule of law; passing smart enforcement on the border and in our workplaces; and creating a visa system that protects labor rights and meets the economic needs of our future—would do more than end today's suffering. It would also fuel economic growth at a time when we most need it. According to a recent Center for American Progress report, comprehensive immigration reform would add \$1.5 trillion to the U.S. GDP over 10 years. It would drive up wages and standards for all workers, and support nearly a million jobs.

Of course, sweeping change is never easy.

But it is necessary.

Hal Lewis, professor of Physics at UC Santa Barbara, said:

The word reform means different (even opposite) things to different people, so anything is possible. This is another example of Newspeak. But I see nothing that would inhibit the current Senate from voting to throw open the gates if it is deemed politically advantageous to Democrats in trouble. That it is possible to coerce votes and to buy those that resist coercion has just been demonstrated for those who may have forgotten.

Peter Navarro, professor of economics and public policy at UC Irvine, said:

Reid's optimal strategy is to raise the issue to show his Hispanic street creds but let it go nowhere before the election. The bigger issue here from an economic standpoint is something that Republicans and conservatives need to understand: To avoid future tax hikes and to help Social Security stay solvent, the best immigration policy would be to target younger, very well-educated professional immigrants. Immigrants are the only way to trump demographics – but they have to be net tax revenue positive.

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PAGE | 1 | 2 | 3 | >

What the Senate needs to investigate are the 250 "sanctuary cities" where it is unlawful for any authority to check on a person's citizenship. These cities are violating dozens of federal laws - giving unemployment benefits and minority set-asides and filling minority quotas and health care benefits - to millions of non-

Americans. Their blatant disregard for the rule of the law, and Congress's refusal to do anything about it, creates a precedent. Obama and the Democrats scoff at the 20 states challenging Obamacare in the courts? They need to be more worried about the 250 cities that have already seceded from the Union.

BY **WH CLARK** on 04/14/2010 at 12:26

Sure they will. The Dems are desperate and will sorely need the votes come November.

BY **STEVE SPACKLE** on 04/14/2010 at 12:32

The SEIU is closely tied to Obama. Endorsing election fraud and admitting to past fraud is going to be a major issue...The other issue...and it is a serious one with conservatives is the dumpster diving and email hacking by democrats to smear political opponents is approaching WaterGate proportions...Americans understand this issue very well...The other issue is...Free Speech...and it is a heads up to many democrats that the liberals are not for free speech. With the Palandino affair, many Americans are looking at that issue very carefully. It will hurt the Dems in the elections...The one major issue that could hurt the Republicans is not regulating Wall Street...Glass-Steagal or something similar needs to be enacted. Wall Street profits are at obscene levels and people don't like...But Free Speech and Privacy is going to trump them all...by 2012

BY **M AND M** on 04/14/2010 at 12:32

With unemployment as high as it is now do not count on it. There are millions Americans of all races who are unemployed who do not want the extra competition when it comes to jobs. Democrats in swing districts are not going to take the risk. Wait until next year when we have a more conservative congress and we can get something both sides can live with.

BY **SHANNON** on 04/14/2010 at 12:35

To the politicians immigrants, both documented and undocumented, represent a vote, and a source of tax revenue. To ordinary Americans they represent a threat to domestic tranquility, and, as regards Mexico, a threat to destabilize the municipal governments. Do we really want to see the "Mexicanization" of the American way of life? Bribery, corruption, and organized crime, are all knocking at the door. Is a free pass really good for America?

BY **MARK** on 04/14/2010 at 12:38

So SEIU admits to voter fraud. Why aren't those laws enforced?

BY **M AND M** on 04/14/2010 at 12:42

You do understand that only citizens are allowed to vote correct? Are there really that many non citizens that once they get permission to stay are willing to risk permanent deportation and vote illegally? Some may but not enough change dozens of seats.

BY **SHANNON** on 04/14/2010 at 12:49

"In this time of despair and economic disaster should it be time that we as a nation started to build and buy in American buy services and products that are created by Citizens of America. Is that really too much to ask? Is it really that outrageous? Are we racists and bigots by simply asking the people of this country to follow the law of the land?" Indeed it is too much to ask. Our Secretive, Unelected, UnAccountable Financial Wizards (that is a joke) have up tied into "international" interests (Paulson made 20 billion on his international hedge fund...in the last two years. Did he make money selling the USA and the Dollar? Soros, if reports are correct openly bets against the dollar and brags about his profits...He owns the Far Left. We are like China before the Opium Wars. We are partitioned by Foreign Nations...Mexico...Israel...Europe...China...Japan...ruled by their interests...and our leaders are little more than puppets. To pass a massive amnesty and push the wages of American workers even lower? What else would you expect of this crew of "leaders" we now have in D.C. We are, after all, in NAFTA language... "moveable trade commodities."

BY **PATSY** on 04/14/2010 at 12:54

"In this time of despair and economic disaster should it be time that we as a nation started to build and buy in American buy services and products that are created by Citizens of America. Is that really too much to ask? Is it really that outrageous? Are we racists and bigots by simply asking the people of this country to follow the law of the land?" Indeed it is too much to ask. Our Secretive, Unelected, UnAccountable Financial Wizards (that is a joke) have up tied into "international" interests (Paulson made 20 billion on his international hedge fund...in the last two years. Did he make money selling the USA and the Dollar? Soros, if reports are correct openly bets against the dollar and brags about his profits...He owns the Far Left. We are like China before the Opium Wars. We are partitioned by Foreign

Nations..Mexico..Israel..Europe..China..Japan...ruled by their interests..and our leaders are little more than puppets. To pass a massive amnesty and push the wages of American workers even lower? What else would you expect of this crew of "leaders"

BY **PATSY** on 04/14/2010 at 12:54

As always, the GOP screams "voter fraud" because they are the ones who commit it, with criminal convictions of Republicans in New Hampshire, Tennessee and Florida.

BY **ALLEN** on 04/14/2010 at 12:57

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