



US Lawmakers Prepare for Vote Next Week on Immigration Bill

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WASHINGTON — Republicans in the U.S. House of Representative plan to hold a vote next week on an immigration bill despite Trump urging them Friday to abandon efforts to pass legislation until after the mid-term elections.

Even if the Republicans — who have a majority in both the House and Senate — approve a bill, it faces almost certain defeat in the upper chamber where Democrats hold enough seats to prevent Republicans, even if they all vote together, from reaching the 60 votes needed for passage.

Earlier in the week, the president had called for Congress to quickly approve sweeping immigration legislation. But in a Friday tweet the president said, "Republicans should stop wasting their time on Immigration until after we elect more Senators and Congressmen/women in November. Dems are just playing games, have no intention of doing anything to solves this decades old problem. We can pass great legislation after the Red Wave!"

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican representing a majority Hispanic district in the state of Florida, who is not running for re-election, termed the president's tweets "schizoid policy making."

Another retiring lawmaker, Republican Congressman Mark Sanford of South Carolina, a frequent Trump critic who recently lost his primary election, said Trump's reversal sends "a horrifically chilling signal" that "makes immigration reform that much more unlikely."

On Saturday, California Democratic Senator Kamala Harris spoke in Otay Mesa, a community in San Diego, at a rally for revised immigration policies. "This is a fight born out of knowing who we are and fighting for the ideals of our country," she said. Harris spoke after touring a detention facility and speaking with several mothers.

Trump's call for Congress to postpone action came as House Republican leaders failed to garner

enough support for two bills that would overhaul U.S. immigration laws and bolster border security.

A hard-line measure authored by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte failed to pass on Thursday. The measure would have not guaranteed young undocumented immigrants a way to achieve permanent legal residency and included controversial enforcement measures such as a required worker validation program.

House Republican leaders suddenly delayed a vote Thursday on a compromise measure that has the support of key moderate Republican after concluding they lacked enough support to gain passage despite the growing controversy over separating children from their families at the U.S.-Mexico border. Next week the House will vote on the compromise bill, which would provide \$25 billion for Trump's border wall, provide a pathway to "dreamers" and keep migrant families intact.

In his weekly radio address Saturday, Trump said the path to immigration reform starts on Capitol Hill.

"Congress and Congress alone can solve the problem. And the only solution that will work is being able to detain, prosecute and promptly remove anyone who illegally cross the border," the president said.

Aboard Air Force One on Saturday en route to Las Vegas, Nevada, Trump lashed out at House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York, accusing them on Twitter of favoring illegal immigrants over American citizens.

All 435 seats in the House and a third of the 100-member Senate will be contested in the November election.

What is unclear, however, is whether Trump realizes the moderate Republicans he is alienating are among the most vulnerable in the mid-term elections.

"No one has more to lose in November than the president does when it comes to the majority in the House, because if this majority flips over to be a Democrat, there will be a big push for impeachment," said Republican Congressman Bradley Byrne of Alabama, an opponent of the immigration measure.

Trump demonstrated Friday after his tactical retreat on immigration policy that there is no strategic shift to his overall tough approach to those attempting to illegally enter the country — vowing to "end the immigration crisis, once and for all."

U.S. immigration laws, Trump declared, are "the weakest in the history of the world."

Trump made the remarks on Friday in an auditorium in the Eisenhower Executive Office

Building, adjacent to the White House, where he presided over an event with "Angel Families" — those who have had relatives killed by people who have entered the country illegally.

"Your loss will not have been in vain," the president told the families who held large photos of their slain relatives. "We will secure our borders ... the word will get out. Got to have a safe country. We're going to have a safe country."

Family members were called by Trump to the presidential lectern to recount how their loved ones were killed by those who were in the United States illegally. Several of those speaking condemned the media for ignoring the stories of the victims and praised Trump and Vice President Mike Pence for their attention to border security.

Trump, in his remarks, also suggested those illegally in the United States commit more crimes on a statistical basis than citizens or resident aliens.

However, studies have shown that undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit a crime in the U.S. than native-born citizens, including one published by the libertarian CATO Institute this year.

Despite Trump's anti-immigration rhetoric, 75 percent of Americans believe immigration in general is beneficial to the U.S., according to a poll released Thursday by the polling organization Gallup.

"Americans' strong belief that immigration is a good thing for the country and that immigration levels shouldn't be decreased present the president and Congress with some tough decisions as to midterm elections loom," Gallup said in a press release.