

President Barack Obama announces immigration reform plan on Thursday

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President Barack Obama will have a prime time address tonight that is expected to fuel debates among supporters and the opposition. The president will state his plan on the immigration system without the agreement of an opposition Congress. The route that Obama is taking leaves an impression that he is using the presidential power to its limits.

Even before Obama's address, there are many conservatives who believed that the president infringes the Constitution and he overstepped his own authority. They even thought that he was selecting areas of law to prioritize.

However, Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute said that drawing a line on the presidential power is a difficult and murky process. Nowrasteh stated that the president's action is considered unconstitutional if he effectively nullifies the federal law. However, it is still in the discretion of Obama if he just channels enforcement resources to other areas covered under the law.

The White House based Obama's decision to use the presidential power to the legal precedents established by earlier presidents. Among the presidents who reshaped the immigration system includes George H.W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon.

The elder Bush allowed 1.5 million undocumented spouses and children of people shielded from deportation to stay in the country. The number of those who benefited from the executive power was about 40 percent of illegal immigrants in the United States during that time.

Reagan, on the other hand, helped 100,000 families caught in a loophole that was included in the 1986 immigration reform bill passed by the Congress. There were 200,000 Nicaraguan exiles who also received relief during the Reagan administration.

The Obama administration is firm that the president is acting within his powers. Although there are no reasoning being leaked on tonight's speech, the White House is expected to argue on how the president simply wield his constitutional powers in applying the law.