

THE IMMIGRATION REFORM SAGA CONTINUES

Last month Congress established a bipartisan comprehensive immigration bill proposed by both the Republican and Democratic parties. The proposed bill was meant to provide a path to legalization to millions of undocumented aliens who have had no means to legalize their status in the United States since April 2001.

Unfortunately, after two weeks of intense negotiations, members of the U.S. Senate could not reach an agreement on the proposed bill. As a result, the Senate's immigration reform bill has been pulled for the time being. Senate leaders on both sides of the political parties expressed a desire to bring the measure back to the floor in the not too distant future. However, this could mean in a few weeks, or even a few months.

The bipartisan compromise sponsored by President Bush failed a crucial test when it could not attract even a simple majority for an effort to speed its passage. Supporters of the bill could muster only 45 votes to limit debate and speed the bill to final passage, 15 short of what was needed on the procedural maneuver. Fifty senators voted against cutting off debate. Most Republicans voted to block Democrats' efforts to advance the measure.

At this time it does not appear that the immigration reform bill is dead, but a crowded Senate calendar complicates its prospects. To make matters worse, the bill's chances are even smaller in the House, where Democratic leaders don't plan to act on this divisive issue until the Senate has finished work on it.

The legislation would tighten borders and institute a new system to prevent employers from hiring undocumented workers, in addition to giving up to 12 million illegal immigrants a pathway to legal status.

Not all is bad news, though. Advocates of immigration bill still hope to gain Senate passage sometime in the fall -- if a weakened President Bush can win over Republicans facing grass-roots conservative pressure to kill the bill.

President Bush stated he will meet with Republican senators to try to get the measure back on track. While traveling in Europe, President Bush intends to continue calling key Republicans in hopes to persuade them to sponsor legal immigration. President Bush said the American people expect people in Washington, D.C. to solve this problem. He indicated he will work closely with member of his party so that an immigration bill may become law this year, in order to show the American people that we can prove we're serious about confronting the great issues of our time. President Bush thinks now is the time to set aside all the political wrangling that tends to dominate the scene in Washington, D.C., and do hard work and pass a comprehensive immigration bill.

The problem with the immigration bill is even if the Senate manages to revive the bill, its difficulties are likely to face fierce resistance in the House of Representatives from

Republicans who oppose any type of immigration reform as they consider it to be the equivalent of an “amnesty”.

Whatever the outcome of the immigration reform bill, it is sure to be a long-lasting battle in both houses of Congress. On the other hand, if our immigration laws are not changed sometime soon, families will continue to be torn apart, immigration raids will increase at the workplace, people will continue to risk their lives crossing the US-Mexico border, and illegal immigrants will continue to live in this country as sub-class citizens. In short, immigration reform is a necessary action that needs to be address to remedy a bad situation for both our country and our people.