

Senate “Gang of 8” Immigration Bill (S. 744)

On June 27, 2013, the US Senate passed the “Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act.” This bill includes a path to citizenship for many undocumented immigrants as well as several other major changes to our immigration system.

Path to citizenship: Undocumented immigrants who were in the US before December 31, 2011, could start a four-step process that will lead to US citizenship:

- They would first apply for “registered provisional immigrant” (RPI) status, which would allow them live and work in the US for six years. To apply, they must pay a \$1,000 fine and pass a background check.
- After six years, they would need to pass another background check and meet certain work or educational requirements to renew their RPI status.
- After ten years of RPI status, they could then apply for green cards if they pay another \$1,000 fine, pass another background check, meet further work and English requirements.
- Immigrants on this track would then qualify for citizenship after three years of green card status.

The Department of Homeland Security could not start granting RPI applications or issuing green cards to RPIs until it meets certain “triggers” regarding border security and enforcement.

DREAM Act: Immigrants who came to the US before turning 16 and who got a diploma or GED can get green cards after five years of RPI status. They would not need to pay the \$1,000 fines, but would need to finish two years of college or four years of military service, and pass a background check and an English and civics test. Once they get a green card, they can apply for citizenship immediately.

Family visas: The bill would move the family backlogs faster and keep families in the backlog together while they are waiting. However, US citizens would no longer be able to sponsor their married sons and daughters who are 32 or older or their brothers and sisters to immigrate. These relatives would need to go through a new “merit” system that would give them—and other applicants—points based on their relationship to the US citizen, their work history and education, their English ability, their age, and other factors. Those applicants in this system with the most points would get green cards.

Enforcement: To win additional support, the Senate added to the bill a “border surge” which requires the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deploy nearly 40,000 Border Patrol agents on the southern border, and specifies minimum numbers of cameras, sensors, and other equipment to be used at each Border Patrol sector. DHS must also fully put in place the E-Verify program for employers to check whether their new hires can lawfully work, and an electronic exit tracking system to make sure that temporary visa holders leave.

For more details and for information about other parts of the bill, please visit www.icirr.org/content/details-senate-gang-eight-immigration-reform-proposal.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO

Now that the Senate has acted, the US House must also act. Over the next several weeks, we will need to ***move key House Republicans*** to move forward on immigration reform. ***To get involved, please call ICIRR at 312-332-7360 or visit www.icirr.org***.