

Senate deal breathes life into immigration bill

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Senate leaders reached a deal Thursday on reviving a broad immigration bill that could provide millions of illegal immigrants a chance to become American citizens and said they'll try to pass it before Memorial Day.

The agreement brokered by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tennessee, and Minority Harry Reid, D-Nevada, breaks a political stalemate that has lingered for weeks while immigrants and their supporters held rallies, boycotts and protests to push for action.

Key to the agreement is who will be negotiating a compromise with the House, which last December passed an enforcement-only bill that would subject the estimated 11 million to 12 million illegal immigrants in the United States to felony charges as well as deportation.

Frist said the Senate will send 14 Republicans and 12 Democrats to negotiate with the House, with seven of the Republicans coming from the Judiciary Committee and seven of the Democrats chosen by Reid.

Frist said a "considerable" number of amendments would be debated when the Senate begins debating the bill early next week.