

2013 Immigration Reform Makes Cantor's Legislative Agenda, But Uncertainty Remains Over Undocumented

By [Laura Matthews](#)

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Cantor noted that the House “may begin considering” this fall the five bills passed in various committees. No one in the majority leader's office was available for a comment Wednesday evening on when exactly the bills will be brought to the floor. “Before we consider any other reforms, it is important that we pass legislation securing our borders and providing enforcement mechanisms to our law enforcement officials,” the memo read.

This should be a good sign for immigration reform advocates: Unlike in [previous memos](#) from Cantor, this one did not mention immigration reform as [an afterthought](#) -- even though thorny issues like appropriations, debt limit, Syria, nutrition (food stamps) and Obamacare all came before it on the agenda, in that particular order.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., said on a radio program Tuesday that it was likely bills resulting from a piecemeal approach could hit the floor in October. That is even though lawmakers' attention has been focused on Syria, with a continuing resolution to keep the government funded and the debt ceiling debate very close behind. Congress only has nine legislative days this month. However, Goodlatte isn't focused on the short number of days versus the mammoth tasks Congress has to face.

“That should not deter us from getting to [immigration reform] as soon as possible,” he told the [Kojo Nnamdi Show](#).

The chairman also acknowledged that members of the lower chamber are still working on a bill addressing immigrant children that is yet to be written. The concept of this legislation, however, is to grant legal status to children brought to America illegally. But, lawmakers also want the bill to contain some deterrence for parents planning to do this in the future.

Additionally, Goodlatte said work is being done on a bill pertaining to “legal status for people who are not lawfully here today -- a larger group” estimated to be 11 million people

So far, none of the bills passed by committees in the House tackles providing a path to citizenship for the undocumented. But Goodlatte said it is not good to have a broken system with 11 million people who are in the U.S. with no legal immigration status.

“Finding appropriate legal status for a great many of them also needs to be a priority,” he said.

“We still need to find the appropriate legal status for those who are not lawfully present and those who through no fault of their own were brought into the U.S. by their parents at a young age, but we must have enforcement as a prerequisite,” a House Judiciary aide told the International Business Times.

The chairman admitted on the radio show that at this time Republicans just don’t know what a bill addressing that part of the issue will look like -- whether it will be just legal status, or there will be a way to earn citizenship.

Frank Sharry, executive director of America’s Voice and a pro-immigration reform advocate, said House leaders now need to “blow past Goodlatte and embrace a bipartisan approach.”

“The Bob Goodlatte approach is a road to nowhere,” Sharry said in a statement. “Of the measures he has ushered through his Judiciary Committee, all are partisan and piecemeal, and at least one is a poison pill. (...) In fact, we’ll know House Republican leaders are serious about passing immigration reform when they get serious about working with Democrats on all aspects of immigration reform, including the central issue, which is what to do about the 11 million undocumented immigrants settled in America.”

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