

3 Things Blocking Immigration Reform in the House

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May 24, 2013

After a Senate committee passed the Gang of Eight immigration bill this week, audience members at the hearing chanted, "Sí se puede." That might not be the case once it's the House of Representatives turn to take up immigration reform.

Supporters of reform believe that the Democrat-controlled Senate will be much more willing to pass a bill with a pathway to citizenship than the [GOP-controlled House](#). Any hope that the bipartisan Gang of Eight bill could quickly sail through both chambers was quashed on Thursday, when GOP leaders in the House said they would not simply take up and pass the legislation as is.

"The House remains committed to fixing our broken immigration system, but we will not simply take up and accept the bill that is emerging in the Senate if it passes," House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio), Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.), and other top lawmakers said in a joint statement. "Rather, through regular order, the House will work its will and produce its own legislation."

That doesn't necessarily mean that the immigration reform effort will die in the House, but there's certainly an appetite to churn out a more conservative product. Whether the House can actually produce such a bill, and then square it with the Senate's, remains to be seen.

Here are three big reasons why immigration will be heavy lift in the House:

1. Uncertainty from Leadership

Earlier this year, both [Boehner](#) and [Cantor](#) sounded optimistic tones on immigration reform. The duo had remained coy about how they will handle the issue, but their tone gave supporters hope that longstanding Republican opposition to a comprehensive bill had disappeared.

Not so fast.

The reality is that Republican leadership is facing dueling tensions within their party. On one hand, party elites and political strategists see the [writing on the wall](#): Republicans need to act on immigration reform in order to tap into the Hispanic and Asian-American electorate (and actually have a shot at winning national elections).

But on the other hand, there's a large group of conservative GOP lawmakers who aren't so fond of immigration reform, to put it mildly. In fact, there's a good chance that a majority of House Republicans [oppose](#) legalizing immigrants in the country without authorization, since they think it amounts to ["amnesty."](#)

So, leaders like Boehner and Cantor might see the long-term political logic behind [bucking many in their conference](#) and cooperating on immigration reform. But that decision would come with significant short-term political peril.

2. A Wild Card Conference

For every Paul Ryan, Sean Duffy and Raúl Labrador who want to compromise on immigration, there's a Steve King, Louie Gohmert and Steve Stockman who will fight tooth and nail against it.

The [latter trio](#) is leading the opposition to immigration reform in the House. All three are known for making outlandish, and sometimes offensive, statements about immigration reform or immigrants.

In the 21st century, that would seem to marginalize a politician. But if King & Co. are able to foment [conservative outrage](#) against the bill, we could see a repeat of 2007. Then, a similar bill was sunk by a revolt from talk-radio hosts, grassroots groups, and right-wing lawmakers.

King and other Republicans are already trying to compare immigration to President Obama's healthcare law. And we all remember how conservatives [reacted](#) to that.

3. A Fractured Gang

The House has its own bipartisan Gang of Eight, which has been meeting on and off for nearly four years to craft a comprehensive immigration reform bill.

The group of four Democrats and four Republicans announced they had reached a deal in principle last week. But that pronouncement now appears to have been made prematurely.

[Politico reports](#) that lawmakers agreed on a compromise over whether immigrants applying for citizenship should receive government-subsidized healthcare. But other significant issues remain unresolved, like provisions around border-security.

If the group is unable to agree on a comprehensive proposal, that could lead to a flood of bills that deal with immigration issues on a piecemeal basis. Some House Republicans prefer to tackle immigration [issue-by-issue](#), but Senate leaders have called that approach a non-starter, fearing that a pathway to citizenship -- crucial for Democrats -- could be left aside.

Theoretically, the Senate bill could be reconciled with a series of House bills. But judging by the level of dysfunction in Congress, that approach would have a slim chance of succeeding.

Boehner may have summed it up best on Thursday, when he spoke to reporters at his weekly press conference.

"The House will work its will," he said. "Don't ask me how because if I knew I'd certainly tell you."

http://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/Politics/things-blocking-immigration-reform-house/story?id=19250174