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# **Bush Urges Congress to Find Compromise on Immigration**

By JOHN O'NEIL

President Bush exhorted Congress today to find a compromise on immigration, saying that "the difficulty of this task is no excuse for avoiding it."

Speaking at the headquarters of the United States Chamber of Commerce a block from the White House, Mr. Bush also sought to portray some of the most hotly contested parts of the Senate bill he favors as being in tune with the focus on security that is the heart of the bill passed by the House.

The House passed its bill, which calls for the deportation of the estimated 11 million illegal aliens now in the country, last December. The Senate bill, which would create a guest worker program and a path to citizenship for some illegal immigrants, was passed last week.

When Congress returns from its Memorial Day task, the two bills will move to a conference committee to see if their differences can be resolved. In a sign of how hard that may be, the House's chief negotiator on the issue last week described the two chambers as being "oceans and moons apart."

Reaching a compromise "will require effort and compromise on both sides," President Bush said today. "It's a difficult task, yet the difficulty of this task is no excuse for avoiding it."

As he has in recent weeks, Mr. Bush dwelt at greatest length at the measures he is taking to improve enforcement, including support for a plan to build fences along part of the border that he had once opposed, and the deployment of 6,000 National Guard troops to support the Border Patrol.

He also repeated his calls for a "comprehensive" plan that looked beyond the question of border enforcement, while stressing that parts of the Senate bill opposed by the House, like the temporary worker program, would serve to keep illegal immigrants out of the country.

"It shouldn't surprise you when people hike across the hot desert and risk their lives to come and work, or are willing to get stuffed in the back of an 18-wheeler to come and do a job others won't do here in America," he said. "The fact that people are willing to take those risks puts enormous pressure on our border, so much pressure that walls and patrols aren't going to stop it."

"If the job is to secure this border, it seems like to me we've got to stop the number of people who are trying to sneak across in the first place," the president said.

The prospects for compromise on a guest worker program may be better than on some other provisions. The House negotiator, Representative F. James Sensenbrenner Jr.,

Republican of Wisconsin and chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said last week that he could envision a guest-worker program, if strong enforcement measures were in place first, including an employment-verification system and tough sanctions on employers who hired illegal immigrants.

Mr. Bush today called for just such measures. He proposed the creation of an identity card for temporary workers that would include a biomarker like a digital fingerprint, and praised the Senate bill for making it mandatory for businesses to verify immigrants' documents using a database of federal information. And he called for an increase in penalties on companies that hire illegal workers that Mr. Bush said "provide little incentive to businesses to enforce the law."

Mr. Sensenbrenner was more adamant in opposing the Senate plan to create a path for citizenship for illegal immigrants who have been in the United States for longer than two years, flatly calling it an "amnesty" that the House would never support.

Mr. Bush countered today that any immigration bill "has got to address the reality that millions of illegal immigrants are here already" and that only a plan that gives "an automatic path to citizenship" should be called an amnesty.

The Senate bill sets different levels of requirements for immigrants who have been in the country, but would require all to pay a fine, show proficiency in English and maintain a clean employment record before they could apply for citizenship.

Even after that, Mr. Bush said, "approval would not be automatic," noting that their applications would "wait in line" behind those "who played by the rules."

"Some members of Congress argue that no one who came to this country illegally should be allowed to continue living and working in our country," he said. "I appreciate the members of Congress who are acting on deeply felt principles. I understand that. Yet I also believe that the approach they suggest is wrong and unrealistic."