

After Shutdown, Immigration Reform Push Picks Up

- by [Julián Aguilar](#)
- October 17, 2013

With the federal government fully operational and the debt ceiling debate on hold until next year, proponents of immigration reform resumed their campaign blitz and called on leaders to address the issue before the year ends.

The push came after President Obama on Thursday reasserted his belief that Congress can tackle immigration reform after taking on the budget.

“There's already a broad coalition across America that's behind this effort of comprehensive immigration reform — from business leaders to faith leaders to law enforcement,” Obama said, according to an emailed transcript of the president's remarks.

The House calendar indicates Congress must act quickly to make immigration reform happen this year. There are fewer than 25 working days left on the regular calendar, according to the agenda posted on [the website for](#) House Majority Leader Eric Cantor of Virginia. House Republicans have yet to indicate whether they expect to take up immigration reform before the end of the year.

The president reiterated that the Senate has already passed a measure that would beef up border security and “modernize our legal immigration system; make sure everyone plays by the same rules, makes sure that folks who came here illegally have to pay a fine, pay back taxes, meet their responsibilities.”

He added that if that bill became law, the country would see a 5 percent climb in the economy over 20 years.

Advocates said the issue could provide the stage for a comeback for the GOP, whose image took a hit after the 16-day standoff that furloughed thousands of federal employees and shut down various nonessential services.

“The central question is whether [House Speaker John] Boehner and smart Republicans in the House will take the get-out-of-jail card that Democrats are offering to them on immigration reform,” Frank Sharry, the executive director of America's Voice, a pro-reform outfit, said in a statement.

“Working with Democrats to pass reform will help the GOP rehabilitate their badly damaged brand, solve a huge political problem facing the GOP with respect to Latino, Asian and immigrant voters, and prove to the American people they can govern responsibly rather than recklessly.”

First Focus, a bipartisan organization that promotes the interests of families and children in budget issues, said that although failure to pass a bill would bode badly for Republicans, children would be the true losers.

More than 150,000 children will lose parents to deportation every year, DREAM-eligible youths would continue living in a “limbo” status and the current system would continue to be a magnet for unaccompanied minors who make the trek to the U.S. every year, the group said in a statement.

The Senate bill, S. 744, [passed the chamber in June](#). It would create a 13-year path to citizenship for the majority of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country, including about 1.7 million who live in Texas.

But the bill also contains the [Corker-Hoeven amendment](#), which would double the amount of U.S. Border Patrol officers and add hundreds of miles of fencing on the southern border. It’s opposed by border Democrats who say the build-up is unnecessary. Shortly after the bill was passed, the Republican leadership in the U.S. House said it would not consider the omnibus bill and would instead approach reform in a piecemeal approach.

In his remarks, the president called on Republicans to offer improvements to the Senate version and come to the table for a discussion.

“If the House has ideas on how to improve the Senate bill, let’s hear them,” he said. “Let’s start the negotiations. But let’s not leave this problem to keep festering for another year, or two years or three years.

<http://www.texastribune.org/2013/10/17/advocates-immigration-reform-continue-push/>