

Bleak Prognosis From Both Sides of Aisle in House for Immigration Overhaul

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WASHINGTON — Two leading House lawmakers — one Republican and one Democrat — declared efforts to overhaul the nation’s broken immigration system all but dead for the year, the result of hardening Tea Party opposition and growing mistrust of President Obama among congressional Republicans.

The grim prospect for an immigration compromise comes a year after the Senate passed a comprehensive immigration bill with broad bipartisan support that included both enhanced border security and a path to citizenship for the estimated 11 million immigrants in the country illegally. Pressure now shifts to the White House to address the situation through executive action.

Delivering an emotional and defiant [speech](#) on the House floor Wednesday, Representative Luis V. Gutiérrez, an Illinois Democrat who has long been an outspoken and optimistic voice for an immigration deal, took a cue from the World Cup craze and handed his Republican colleagues a “red card” — used in soccer to signal a player’s ejection — as he declared any chance of compromise over for the year.

“You’re done, you’re done, leave the field,” Mr. Gutiérrez said. “Too many flagrant offenses and unfair attacks and too little action. You are out. Hit the showers. It’s the red card.”

On the Republican side, Representative Robert W. Goodlatte of Virginia offered a similarly bleak assessment and twice called the chances of pushing immigration legislation through Congress this year “exceedingly difficult.”

At a breakfast for reporters on Thursday organized by The Christian Science Monitor, Mr. Goodlatte, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, called for “enforcement of the law first,” and said the Republican-controlled House, which has long rejected the Senate bill in favor of a step-by-step approach, did not trust Mr. Obama to enforce the existing immigration laws.

“Until the president shows leadership on enforcement, it is very difficult to bring the parties together to talk about passing laws,” Mr. Goodlatte said. “We’re not going to be able to get to addressing immigration issues when the president is both acting unilaterally and failing to enforce the law.”

Many Republicans and Tea Party groups were outraged by Mr. Obama’s 2012 decision to use his executive authority to [halt the deportation](#) of young immigrants brought to the country illegally

as children, as well as his [State of the Union promise](#) this past January to use his “pen and phone” to counter congressional inaction.

In a sign of the growing distrust, Speaker John A. Boehner on Wednesday declared his plans to introduce legislation next month that would allow the House to [sue the president](#) over his use of executive actions.

The recent flood of tens of thousands of [unaccompanied children](#) from Central America to the Mexico-Texas border has also strained relations across the aisle. Democrats point to the crisis as another reason to act on immigration immediately; Republicans say the surge of minors is another byproduct of Mr. Obama’s failure to enforce the law.

“Speaker Boehner supports efforts to fix our broken immigration system, particularly in light of the humanitarian crisis at our southern border, but it’s tough to make progress when the American people simply don’t trust President Obama to enforce the law as written,” said Michael Steel, a Boehner spokesman.

The [surprise loss](#) of Representative Eric Cantor of Virginia, the House majority leader, to a Tea Party challenger in a primary this month has further discouraged House Republicans from moving on an immigration deal before the midterm elections in November. Mr. Cantor’s challenger, David Brat, ran on an anti-immigration platform.

Nonetheless, Democratic leaders from both the Senate and House held out a sliver of hope in a news conference Thursday that they could pressure House Republicans into bringing some immigration legislation to the floor for a vote before the monthlong August recess.

“We demand, we plead, we ask on behalf of the overwhelming majority of the American people, bring this comprehensive immigration bill to the floor, and do it now,” said Representative Steny H. Hoyer of Maryland, the Democratic whip.

But Democrats as well as immigration advocates also made clear that if immigration overhaul dies in Congress this year, they believe the blame falls squarely on their Republican colleagues.

“We think the chances of immigration reform moving in this Congress are virtually nil and the next chance we’ll have to revisit this issue is in 2017,” said Frank Sharry, the executive director of [America’s Voice](#), a pro-immigration group. He added that the group was stepping up efforts to persuade Mr. Obama to stop at least some deportations through his executive authority.

He, like other immigration activists, predicted that Republicans would face long-term political consequences: “This is going to be one of the factors that is going to lead to an electoral tsunami in 2016 that will not only help Democrats take the White House and the Senate, but to also to have a shot at retaking the House,” Mr. Sharry said.

Inside the White House, officials are divided on whether to abandon efforts for passage of an immigration overhaul or continue to have Mr. Obama pressure Republicans in the House to take up the issue this summer.

Many others believe that Republicans are not going to budge. Some are urging the president to act unilaterally to reduce those deportations that are breaking up families who have been in this country for years.

The secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, was preparing to make such an announcement in the spring, but Mr. Obama had him delay it to give Republicans in Congress more time to consider passing a broader overhaul. Officials said the announcement could come this summer.

Some Republicans think there may still be a narrow window for a step-by-step approach to legislation early next year, before the 2016 presidential campaign begins in earnest — but only if Republicans retake the Senate, which would give them the opportunity to draft a new immigration bill more to their liking.

Still, most Democrats and advocates for immigrants believe the next chance for broad immigration legislation will not be until January 2017, after a new president is elected.

“Because with Republican primaries and presidential candidates vying for the hard-right element that votes in those primaries, I think it’s virtually impossible for the House to take it up,” Senator Charles E. Schumer, Democrat of New York, said.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/27/us/politics/on-both-sides-of-aisle-the-houses-hopes-fade-for-an-immigration-overhaul.html>