

Boehner: It's 'time to deal' with immigration

Posted by Rosalind S. Helderman on January 26, 2013 at 4:07 pm

[In a speech that was closed to the press](#), Boehner told the Ripon Society, a Republican public policy organization, on Tuesday that it is “time to deal” with immigration changes. He said the House group, whose members he did not name, have been holding quiet conversations for three or four years and would be coming forward soon with proposals.

The Ripon Society released some excerpts on Wednesday but Boehner's comments came in a question-and-answer period that has received less notice. They were [first reported Saturday by the Hill newspaper](#).

The comments were significant because advocates of immigration changes have long assumed legislative action on the issue would need to begin in the Democratic-majority Senate.

A [bipartisan group of Senators](#) has been meeting in an attempt to draft a comprehensive immigration reform bill by March or April. Proponents hope a strong bipartisan vote in the Senate, potentially by the summer, could pressure the GOP-House to act as well. Their work comes as President Obama prepares a major push on the issue, beginning with a speech in Las Vegas on Tuesday.

But Boehner's comments suggested action in the House is possible as well. In response to a question, Boehner said it is “time to deal” with changes to immigration law. Republican leaders, long opposed to legal changes that would allow more than 11 million undocumented immigrants to obtain legal residency, are increasingly shifting on the issue. They fear alienating a growing bloc of Latino voters whose opposition could force the party into a permanent minority status.

“There's a bipartisan group of members who have been meeting for three or four years now,” Boehner told the Ripon Society. “Frankly, I think they basically have an agreement. I've not seen the agreement. I don't know all the pitfalls. But it's, in my view, the right group of members.”

“My theory was that if these folks could work this out, it'd be a big step in the right direction,” Boehner said, describing the group as one that includes both “hard heads” on the Republican side, as well as advocates of immigration reform. “So I would think you're likely to hear a lot more about immigration reform on the House side soon.”

A spokesman for Boehner told the Post that Boehner was referring merely to conversations between members. “Informal groups of members constantly meet to discuss all kinds of issues—including immigration,” said spokesman Michael Steel.

Steel told the Hill that no legislation is pending. “At this point, there is no such legislation scheduled for a hearing, let alone a markup, in the committees of jurisdiction in the House,” he said.

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