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## 5 reasons why immigration reform may not be dead after all

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I remain a skeptic, but some business groups contend there's still a chance the House will pass comprehensive immigration reform this year.

They outlined their arguments Friday in a weekly press call about immigration reform hosted by America's Voice, an organization that supports comprehensive legislation that would include a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Joining them this week were representatives from FWD.us, the immigration reform advocacy group founded by Facebook's [Mark Zuckerberg](#) and other technology industry leaders; and Partnership for a New American Economy, a pro-reform group co-chaired by former New York City Mayor [Michael Bloomberg](#) and corporate heavyweights ranging from Disney CEO [Bob Iger](#) to NewsCorp Chairman and CEO [Rupert Murdoch](#).

Here are five reasons why they are hopeful about immigration reform's chances:

### [Kevin McCarthy](#) will be the next House majority leader

House Majority Whip [Kevin McCarthy](#) has quickly won the support of enough Republican members to pretty well clinch his selection next week as [Eric Cantor](#)'s replacement as majority leader.

That's significant because McCarthy is on record [supporting a pathway to legal status](#) for America's 11 million undocumented immigrants — the key sticking point to any immigration reform bill. McCarthy's California district is heavily agricultural and 35 percent Latino, so he hears about the need for immigration reform every time he goes home to his district.

"He's someone that gets the issue," said [Jeremy Robbins](#), executive director of the Partnership for a New American Economy.

[Frank Sharry](#), executive director of America's Voice, said McCarthy will either be "a hero or a zero."

"He can save the GOP from itself by quickly scheduling a vote on historic legislation that the majority of the House, the country and even his district supports; or he can squander the opportunity, let the [Steve King](#) caucus run the show and do for the national party what [Pete Wilson](#) did for the California Republican Party," Sharry said. "The future of the GOP may well hinge on his choice."

## **Eric Cantor didn't lose because of immigration reform**

[Dave Brat](#), the Tea Party insurgent who defeated Cantor in Tuesday's Republican primary in Virginia, hammered the majority leader as being "pro-amnesty" because of his support for allowing children of undocumented immigrants to obtain U.S. citizenship.

Plus Cantor had indicated he was open to additional immigration reforms, although he danced around the specifics.

Many analysts, including me, think Cantor's loss will make other Republicans afraid of supporting immigration reform out of fear they could be vulnerable to similar challenges from the right in their districts.

But that's a "false narrative," said [Todd Schulte](#), executive director of FWD.us. Cantor lost because he had lost touch with his district, not because of immigration reform, he said.

A [poll of voters](#) in the Cantor-Brat primary found that only 22 percent cited immigration reform as the main reason for their vote. The biggest issue in the race was the sense that Cantor "was too focused on Washington instead of local needs," according to the poll, which was conducted by Basswood Research, a Republican polling firm.

More than 72 percent supported comprehensive immigration reform along the lines of the legislation passed by the Senate: more secure borders, a crackdown on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and a conditional pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

## **Support for immigration reform didn't hurt Lindsey Graham**

Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#), R-South Carolina, voted for the Senate immigration reform and easily won his Republican primary on the same day Cantor went down to defeat.

Graham won because he "stood strong" on immigration reform "and knew how to explain it," Sharry said.

That's a better political strategy than trying to finesse the issue like Cantor did, Robbins said.

## **If the House won't act on immigration reform, Obama will**

The White House has hinted that President [Barack Obama](#) will take executive actions to implement partial immigration reform if the House doesn't pass comprehensive immigration reform this summer.

Two years ago, for example, the president announced his administration would stop deporting undocumented young people who were brought to the U.S. as children, as long as they meet certain criteria. The president could expand this relief to other undocumented immigrants, Sharry suggested.

Immigration reform advocates will demand action from Obama if the House fails to act.

That gives House Republicans an incentive to craft their own version of immigration reform if they want to have any say on the issue.

### **Blocking immigration reform could hurt Republicans at the polls**

Republicans aren't in danger of losing control of the House in this year's elections if they block immigration reform, but it could hurt their chances of winning the Senate, and create big political problems in 2016.

Hispanics are a growing demographic, and immigration reform is a huge issue with them. If it doesn't happen, they'll blame Republicans, Schulte said.

The issue is playing out this year in two Colorado congressional races, said [Patty Kupfer](#), a Colorado-based managing director of America's Voice.

"Things are not looking good," she said, for [Cory Gardner](#), the Republican trying to unseat Democratic Sen. [Mark Udall](#), and Rep. [Mike Coffman](#), a Republican who faces a challenge from Democrat Andrew Romanoff.

Like Cantor, the positions of both Colorado Republicans on immigration reform "are hard to figure out," Kupfer said.

Udall, by contrast, has been aggressive on immigration reform, calling on Obama to act if the House doesn't.

Latino groups are getting ready to launch a big voter registration and turnout operation in Colorado, she noted.

What happens in Colorado in 2014, she said, could be a preview of what will happen nationwide in competitive races in 2016, Kupfer said.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/news/news-wire/2014/06/13/5-reasons-why-immigration-reform-may-not-be-dead.html>