

Goodlatte hopes for immigration reform 'sometime' in 2014

By Joe Beck

FRONT ROYAL -- It's too late to pass immigration reform legislation this year, but there's a chance one or more bills could be voted on in 2014, U.S. Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Roanoke, said Tuesday.

"We don't know when that will be," Goodlatte said, "but we hope it will be sometime next year."

Goodlatte was interviewed after he spoke at a luncheon of civic and business leaders. The invitation-only event drew about 15 people, a sparse turnout Goodlatte and his staff attributed to the winter storm that passed through the area in the morning.

As chairman of House Judiciary Committee, Goodlatte is playing a key role in whether immigration reform passes Congress. So far, he has opposed a comprehensive bill approved by the Senate and instead chosen to divide immigration issues into separate bills.

Goodlatte is seeking more enforcement measures and has rejected a provision in the Senate bill that would create a path to citizenship for millions of illegal immigrants.

"I don't believe someone who is here illegally should get a special pathway" to citizenship ahead of legal immigrants who have been waiting for years to gain citizenship, Goodlatte said.

Goodlatte devoted much of his luncheon presentation to calling for sharp reductions in the national debt. He illustrated his points with a variety of charts and graphs showing long term trends in federal spending and deficit and debt levels.

Goodlatte proposed passing a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution through a constitutional convention called by the states, if necessary, as one step toward obtaining the spending cuts needed to tame the debt.

He also proposed changes in entitlement programs such as Medicare and food stamps that would limit or cut spending on them. Medicare's costs have been rising at four times the rate of inflation, Goodlatte said.

"It's absolutely unsustainable," Goodlatte said of Medicare. "It has to be reformed."

He also rejected calls by President Obama and congressional Democrats to couple any cuts in entitlement programs with tax increases on the wealthy.

"Our objection to tax increases is that they simply mask the nature of the problem," Goodlatte said. "Just like the tax increases the president just got. It helps a little bit for a short while and then, even though it is assumed to continue on forever, because the programs are unchecked, they grow and wipe out the benefits of the tax increase."

"So, if we give another tax increase, it's just an excuse for delaying the inevitable and reforming these programs."

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