

GOP rep expects October immigration reform vote

[Benjy Sarlin, @benjysarlin](#)

2:58 PM on 09/10/2013

A Honduran mother holds her toddler son at the U.S. Border Patrol detainee processing center on April 11, 2013, in McAllen, Texas. (Photo by John Moore/Getty Images)

Republican Congressman Bob Goodlatte, chair of the House Judiciary Committee overseeing immigration, said he expected Congress to pursue reform legislation despite a tight schedule featuring debates over Syria, health care, and the debt limit.

Those and other issues “should not deter us from getting to [immigration] as soon as possible,” Goodlatte said in an appearance on [WAMU’s Kojo Nnamdi Show](#) on Tuesday.

Goodlatte said he expected votes soon, perhaps in October, on a [series of smaller House bills](#) on border security, internal enforcement, guest workers, and high-tech visas.

“Those bills are ready to go to the floor of the House and it’s my hope they come to the floor of the House as soon as possible,” he said.

That package of legislation might be a relatively easy lift for Republicans. However, when it comes to more controversial issues, namely what to do with the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States today, House Republicans have yet to coalesce around a plan.

That said, Goodlatte pointed to discussions within the House GOP around legislation concerning young undocumented immigrants. More notably, he also mentioned a potential bill “related to the legal status of people who are not here lawfully today, a larger group.”

Goodlatte said House Republicans would only proceed with majority support from within their party, abiding by the so-called “Hastert Rule” that leadership often—but not always—applies to votes. He said members were especially concerned that the Senate’s bill did not go far enough in guaranteeing tough security and enforcement measures that will take effect before affected immigrants obtain legal status.

“We want to make sure that these enforcement mechanisms are put in place before people get a legal status,” he said.

The Virginia Congressman recently deflated immigration reformers’ hopes by suggesting he doesn’t favor a path to citizenship [even for young undocumented immigrants](#). In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* over the recess, he said he might be content to pass a House immigration bill to establish the party’s position and then leave it to a future Congress to actually

negotiate a final deal. Those comments earned him a scathing takedown from the *Washington Post*'s editorial board, which called him an exemplar of "[delay, denial and delusion](#)" on immigration.

But according to Goodlatte's Tuesday interview, the citizenship debate was still ongoing, at least for young undocumented immigrants.

"We don't know what this bill is going to look like...but whether it's a legal status or whether it includes a legal status and then a way to earn citizenship through education, military service, or types of employment, whatever the case might be, all of this is being discussed," he said. One of the big obstacles to reaching a final bill, he added, was trying to find a way to discourage future immigrants from bringing their children to America in the hopes of obtaining legal status for them through similar legislation.

Goodlatte said there was still a discussion within the party in general regarding undocumented immigrants and whether, instead of a "special path to citizenship" they might be able to instead obtain citizenship through more limited visa programs available to legal immigrants. The Senate's bill would grant an expedited path to citizenship for young undocumented immigrants while routing most eligible immigrants through an earned pathway that would take at least 13 years to complete before they obtained citizenship.

"There is a difference of opinion on whether they get a legal status and then an opportunity if they qualify through the traditional ways through which people have qualified for permanent residence or citizenship or whether they would get a special way," he said.

<http://tv.msnbc.com/2013/09/10/hope-for-immigration-reform-lives-gop-rep-hopes-for-october-votes/>