

Immigration bill 2013: House 'gang' punts immigration bill again

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Don't expect the House immigration group to roll out its comprehensive reform bill this summer.

The bipartisan coalition of seven lawmakers has essentially agreed to punt the release of its legislation until at least September, according to several sources close to the private discussions.

Multiple sources described the thinking as this: Unveiling the bill now, shortly before the August recess, would leave the House group little time to educate the public and fellow members about its bill before lawmakers head home to their districts for the month-long break. It could also potentially open up the bill to attack without defenders.

And because House Republicans left last week's immigration confab with no clear legislative strategy forward, that has bought the bipartisan group more time to fine-tune its bills. The Republican-led House appears unlikely to take up any immigration reform measures on the floor this month.

Still, though the House group's comprehensive bill – standing at about 500 pages — has mostly been drafted, there are still some details that lawmakers have to iron out.

One issue is the matter of back taxes. The negotiators generally agree on the concept that current undocumented immigrants should pay what they owe in order to become legalized. But lawmakers haven't finalized a plan for a "fair" system that determines who owes back taxes that doesn't pose a burden on employers, according to one source.

Some of the border security details aren't yet set in stone, either. Rep. John Carter (R-Texas), one of the group's members, wants to add more helicopters as part of the border security plan, and the group is determining how to incorporate that into its proposal, according to a source.

Once the legislation is completely finished, the group plans to solicit additional co-sponsors for its measure, sources said.

The seven House negotiators are Democrats Xavier Becerra and Zoe Lofgren of California; John Yarmuth of Kentucky; and Luis Gutierrez of Illinois; and Republicans Carter and Sam Johnson of Texas and Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/07/immigration-bill-2013-house-gang-punts-immigration-bill-again-94336.html>