

# House GOP backer of immigration reform throws in towel

Posted by [CNN Senior Congressional Producer Deirdre Walsh](#)

**Washington (CNN)** – You know immigration reform is truly dead on Capitol Hill when Florida Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart throws in the towel.

Diaz-Balart has been one of staunchest immigration reform advocates in Congress.

Thursday morning he made one final push in a meeting with Speaker John Boehner to get a House vote on a targeted reform bill he crafted with a small bipartisan group, but he was shut down.

"Today I was informed by the Republican leadership that they have no intention to bring this bill to the floor this year. It is disappointing and highly unfortunate, because we have a unique opportunity to secure the borders, fix our broken immigration system, and strengthen our economy," Diaz-Balart said at a press conference at the Capitol.

The Florida Republican is the son of a former Cuban politician and represents a Miami area district. He has worked for years with various groups of House Republicans and Democrats to push for immigration reform. He tried more intensively in the last eighteen months to come up with a proposal that would thread the tricky political needle of attracting support from both parties. Although he never formally introduced the legislation, his proposal included strong border enforcement provisions, new accountability measures to track the Administration's efforts to crack down on illegal crossings, and a process for those 11 million undocumented workers to gain legal status.

Even after President Barack Obama announced last month that he would no longer wait for Congress to act on immigration and he would use his executive authority, Diaz-Balart was arguing he could round up the votes to support his reform bill. But on Thursday he acknowledged he won't get the chance.

Diaz-Balart called the decision to punt on the issue of immigration reform "highly irresponsible" and criticized leaders of both parties and the White House for shirking their jobs.

"By blocking reform, whether it was when Nancy Pelosi was speaker or now, we are in effect abdicating our duty."

Diaz Balart added, "we have a President that is willing to unilaterally act through executive action, that he himself has said is legally circumspect, will not provide a long-term solution to our immigration system, and I believe could even make it worse."

Boehner's spokesman declined to comment on the meeting with Diaz-Balart, citing a policy of not discussing private discussions with members.

Diaz-Balart thanked Democratic Rep. Luis Gutierrez, D-Illinois, who has been his chief partner in the effort, and the small group of House Republicans he had been consulting, including Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Florida.

Gutierrez told reporters he was "very proud" of Diaz-Balart's efforts. He insisted that because the major education effort the Florida Republican had put in on the issue if the legislation they worked on came up for a vote it would pass.

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