

Immigration Reform Bill 2013: Obama Says Piecemeal Is A Deal

By [Laura Matthews](#) on November 20 2013 6:30 AM

Obama signaled his willingness to work with Republicans as high-ranking members of the House GOP insisted that they have a full plate for the remainder of the year and that a reform bill is dead in 2013.

Senate Democrats passed legislation in June that included provisions for border security, improvements to legal immigration and a 13-year pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who can remain in the country. But conservatives have already rebuked the offer of citizenship as “amnesty,” and House leaders have said the bill won't make it to the floor of the Republican-led chamber without a “majority of the majority” of the party backing it.

Earlier this year, Rep. Al Green, D-Texas, told the Associated Press, “[piecemeal is no deal.](#)”

In speaking to business leaders on Tuesday at the Wall Street Journal's CEO Council conference in Washington, Obama suggested he understands that Republicans are skeptical of taking on such a large issue with a single comprehensive bill.

“They're suspicious of comprehensive bills,” Obama said. “But you know what? If they want to chop that thing up into five pieces, as long as all five pieces get done, I don't care what it looks like, as long as it's actually delivering on those core values that we talked about.”

The president said that what Democrats don't want is for House Republicans to take up only the easier pieces of the overhaul and neglect the harder parts of the job.

“We're not going to have a situation in which 11 million people are still living in the shadows and potentially getting deported on an ongoing basis,” Obama said, regarding the official estimate for the number of undocumented people in the country. “We're going to have to do it all.”

Advocates have praised the president's statement, saying it shows his enthusiasm and flexibility in regards to working with the House GOP.

“Central to that, of course, is a plan to deal responsibly and realistically with the 11 million men, women, and children living in the U.S. without papers,” Lynn Tramonte, deputy director of America's Voice, an immigration advocacy organization based in Washington, said. “Despite months of backroom discussions and promises, we have yet to see House Republicans' proposal on a path to citizenship for aspiring Americans. The ball is in House Republicans' court: step forward with a plan and get it done, or continue to be blamed for blocking reform.”

The speaker [pulled the plug on reform](#) a week ago when he said the House has no intention of conferring the Senate bill with the few piecemeal bills currently being produced in his chamber. Republicans have insisted they will continue their piecemeal approach and resolve immigration reform at their own pace.

In arguing for the Democratic view of reform, Obama said an overhaul of the broken system is a way to strengthen the economy and national security.

A [recent study by the Center for American Progress](#), a Washington-based think tank that advocates for comprehensive immigration reform, found that providing legal status and citizenship to the undocumented would be a boon for recovering economy. The center's data show that a step in that direction would add \$1.4 trillion to the nation's economy over the next decade and an additional 203,000 jobs per year. Furthermore, over a period of 10 years, there would be an additional \$184 billion in tax revenue.

"We wouldn't turn down a deal that good," Obama said. "Congress shouldn't either. So I'm hoping that Speaker [John] Boehner and the House of Representatives can still work with us to get that done."

Despite the bill being taken off life support, the president said, "I am actually optimistic that we're going to get this done. I'm a general optimist."

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