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## **2 Senators Offer Immigration Overhaul**

By [JULIA PRESTON](#)

Two senators, a Democrat and a Republican, unveiled the outlines on Thursday of a proposal to overhaul the [immigration](#) system, which would require illegal immigrants to admit they broke the law before they could gain legal status and require all workers in the United States to carry a biometric identity card to prove that they are eligible to work.

In carefully choreographed moves, the senators, [Charles E. Schumer](#), Democrat of New York, and [Lindsey Graham](#), Republican of South Carolina, described their proposal in an editorial posted at midafternoon on the Web site of The Washington Post.

[President Obama](#) immediately responded with a statement saying it “should be the basis for moving forward,” and he pledged “to do everything in my power to forge a bipartisan consensus this year” around the bill.

Those moves followed like clockwork plans that White House officials had laid out in recent days to the leaders of immigrant advocacy groups that have summoned many thousands of supporters to a march on Sunday in Washington. The White House is struggling to keep prospects for the immigration overhaul alive through a difficult political passage. Marchers will demand that Mr. Obama make good on his repeated promises to push forward with an overhaul, which would grant legal status to an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the country.

Republican lawmakers, including Mr. Graham, have warned that if Democrats pass health care legislation using a parliamentary maneuver that sidesteps their votes, they will not work with the White House on thorny issues like immigration this year.

Mr. Schumer said the blueprint included more and tougher enforcement at the border and in workplaces, a shift intended to overcome opposition that overwhelmed an overhaul proposal in 2007. It minimizes access for future blue-collar foreign workers and favors visas for highly educated immigrants.

“It’s based on the theory that Americans are equally strong on support for legal immigration and opposition to illegal immigration,” Mr. Schumer said in an interview. “Previous bills did not get that balance right, and they failed.”

The plan calls for a big increase in immigration agents patrolling workplaces, and would require all workers, including legal immigrants and American citizens, to present a tamper-proof [Social Security](#) card when they apply for jobs. Biometric identity

information would be stored on the card and not in any government database, according to an explanatory document from the senators.

The plan's emphasis is on making it easier for highly skilled and educated immigrants to come to the United States, including awarding residence documents known as green cards to those who receive advanced degrees in science and technology from American universities. It proposes a limited program for temporary lower-skilled guest workers, tightly keyed to changes in the American labor market.

To gain legal status, illegal immigrants would have to admit their legal violation, pay fines and back taxes and perform community service.

To advance the legislation, Mr. Schumer and Mr. Graham have said they need help from Mr. Obama to round up at least one more Republican sponsor, a prospect that seems unlikely while bitterness over the health care battle prevails on Capitol Hill.

Still, immigrant advocates and some Democratic lawmakers were heartened Thursday when Representative Luis V. Gutierrez, a Democrat from Illinois in charge of immigration issues for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, said he had decided to support the Democrats' health care legislation after assurances from Mr. Obama that the White House would continue to press for the immigration overhaul.

"I have high expectations that his part of the agreement will get done," Mr. Gutierrez said.