

Monday, September 30, 2013

Immigration Roundup: Will an Overhaul Happen?

by [Laura D. Francis](#)

As Congress battles over a funding measure that would prevent the imminent shutdown of the federal government—and later debates the debt ceiling—the prospect of lawmakers returning to legislation overhauling the nation's immigration system appears uncertain.

Compounding the situation, the comprehensive immigration bill being crafted in the House appears dead, with two more Republican members of the bipartisan coalition leaving the group Sept. 20. Reps. John Carter and Sam Johnson of Texas said they didn't trust the president to enforce the law. Their departure follows the exit of Rep. Raul Labrador (R-Idaho) in June.

The momentum that came from the Senate's passage of a comprehensive bill in June and the House Judiciary Committee's approval of several piecemeal immigration measures has been somewhat diminished. But advocates are still optimistic that a vote could occur either late this year or early in 2014.

Rallies are planned in various locations across the country Oct. 5, and a large-scale event set for Oct. 8 in Washington.

Republicans still appear committed to moving forward, albeit through individual measures rather than a single, comprehensive bill. Carter and Johnson in a [joint statement](#) announcing their departure from the House immigration group said they would continue to support that step-by-step approach.

Speakers at a recent [event](#) sponsored by NDN and the New Policy Institute also said they believe an overhaul is coming because there is more consensus on immigration now than during the last attempt to overhaul the system in 2006 and 2007.

Tamar Jacoby, president of ImmigrationWorks USA—which advocates for an immigration overhaul on behalf of small and mid-sized businesses—said she believes House Republicans are working on a compromise for a legalization program for undocumented immigrants already in the country, one of the major sticking points in getting a bill passed. She said the proposal would grant legal status, but not a "special" path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants—instead allowing them to naturalize through existing means.

Frank Sharry, executive director of immigrant advocacy group America's Voice, said he believes Democrats in Congress likely would accept the compromise—but Republicans need to introduce it, and they're running out of time. An election year is looming, and voters may decide that Congress needs more Democrats to get an immigration bill passed, he said.

In Other News:

- California could become the first state to grant law licenses to undocumented immigrants. Following oral arguments in the case of Sergio Garcia, an undocumented attorney who is seeking bar admission (*In re Garcia on Admission*, Cal., No. S202512), state lawmakers passed a measure ([A.B. 1024](#)) that would allow bar admission regardless of immigration status, provided the candidate meets all the other requirements. Gov. Jerry Brown (D) has until Oct. 13 to sign or veto the bill.
- A [proposed rule](#) issued Sept. 26 would amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation to apply human trafficking prohibitions in the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act and a September 2012 executive order to all contracts performed in the U.S. and certain contracts performed outside the country. Comments are due by Nov. 25.
- The Department of Homeland Security Sept. 25 [announced](#) that the fiscal year 2014 cap on Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands-only Transitional Worker (CW-1) permits will be 14,000. This is based on the number of permits requested by CNMI employers for FY 2013 and the desire to strike a balance between the statutory requirement to reduce the cap each year and the possibility that the transition period may be extended beyond the current end date of Dec. 31, 2014, the department said.

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