

More Republicans start calling for immigration changes

By [David Nakamura](#), Published: January 18

A growing number of Republicans and conservative groups have begun pushing for comprehensive immigration changes on the eve of President Obama's inauguration, joining liberal Democrats in hopes of propelling the politically fraught issue forward early in his second term.

The pressure from the right — including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Southern Baptist Convention — has given immigration advocates hope that a sweeping overhaul can gain bipartisan support in Congress more easily than other polarizing issues such as gun control, the federal deficit and taxes.

“If we don't get it right this time, we're probably going to have to wait another five years,” [Carlos Gutierrez](#), a George W. Bush administration official, said at an immigration panel discussion this week.

The newfound energy among Republicans has developed in part as a reaction to the election, in which Latino and Asian voters overwhelmingly supported Obama and other Democrats.

On Friday, America's Voice, a liberal immigration advocacy organization, released findings of a [new poll](#) that found a broad majority of voters in both parties support a plan that would include a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and stricter border control measures.

The analysis, conducted jointly by a pair of Democratic and Republican polling firms, found that such a plan, which would also punish employers who hire undocumented workers and require all immigrants to pay taxes and learn English, was favored by 77 percent of Democratic voters and 80 percent of Republicans. Overall, 14 percent of voters in both parties opposed it.

Other factors beyond electoral politics are also helping to mobilize conservatives.

The Chamber of Commerce, for example, has sought ways to hire more workers in specialized fields such as high-tech engineering and agriculture, where there have been a shortage of U.S. workers.

Advocates on both sides also say they were encouraged by [comments](#) from Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) touting more visas to immigrants for high-tech jobs and allowing the nation's 11 million illegal immigrants to apply for legal status and, eventually, citizenship.

Though Rubio has said he would prefer to move pieces of the immigration proposals as separate bills, aides said he is not wedded to that strategy. White House officials have said Obama plans to back a single comprehensive bill.

Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Donohue said the final form of legislation “is the least of our worries. The fact is that they do it.”

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/more-republicans-start-calling-for-immigration-changes/2013/01/18/cf5ba6e8-60c9-11e2-b05a-605528f6b712_story.html