

Obama Announces Unilateral Action on Immigration

By Serena Marshall and Jon Garcia

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President Obama announced today that he will bypass a stalled Congress and use his executive power to start fixing the nation's immigration system.

"The failure of House Republicans to pass a darn bill is bad for our security, it's bad for our economy and it's bad for our future," he announced today in the Rose Garden. "America cannot wait forever for them to act, and that's why today, I'm beginning a new effort to fix as much of our immigration system as I can on my own, without Congress."

Obama's first moves will include mobilizing the department of homeland security and ordering the attorney general to move resources from the interior to the border in an effort to "refocus our efforts where we can to make sure we do what it takes to keep our border secure."

He also asked DHS secretary Jeh Johnson and Attorney general Eric Holder to give him a list of recommended actions he can take unilaterally before the end of the summer.

"I've told Speaker Boehner that even as I take those steps that I can within my existing legal authorities to make the immigration system work better, I'm going to continue to reach out to House Republicans in the hope that they deliver a more permanent solution with a comprehensive bill," he said. "Maybe it will be after the midterms, when they're less worried about politics. Maybe it will be next year. Whenever it is, they will find me a willing partner."

Acknowledging anger in Congress over the use of his executive action, the President said "I don't prefer taking administrative action. I'd rather see permanent fixes to the issue we face."

"Certainly that's true on immigration. I've made that clear multiple times. I would love nothing more than bipartisan legislation to pass the House, the Senate, land on my desk, so I can sign it," he said. "I take executive action only when we have a serious problem, a serious issue, and Congress chooses to do nothing."

It has been a year since the Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill with bipartisan support; Obama saying he "held off on pressuring them (Republicans)" to see if they could bring the legislation up for a vote, but that has not happened.

"There are enough Republicans and Democrats in the House to pass an immigration bill today, I would sign it into law today, and Washington would solve a problem in a bipartisan way," he said. "But for more than a year, Republicans in the House of Representatives have refused to

allow an up-or-down vote on that Senate bill or any legislation to fix our broken immigration system."

"Our country and our economy would be stronger today if House Republicans had allowed a simple yes-or-no vote on this bill or, for that matter, any bill," he said. "Instead they've proven again and again that they're unwilling to stand up to the Tea Party in order to do what's best for the country. And the worst part about it is, a bunch of them know better."

The Senate bill which passed with bipartisan support would mandate a beefing up of border security by an extra \$30 billion before any of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants can apply for citizenship, as well as a pathway to citizenship that includes paying back taxes, passing a background check, and learning English before going to the back of the line.

"There are a number of Republicans who have been willing to work with us to pass real common-sense immigration reform, and I want to thank them for their efforts," Obama said.

Obama said he believes Speaker John Boehner wants to pass reform.

"I think he genuinely wants to get something done," he said. "But last week he informed me the Republicans will continue to block a vote on immigration reform at least for the remainder of this year."

Throughout the past year leaders from religious organizations, business groups---like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, labor and law enforcement have all come together to voice their support for reform. According to the last ABC News/Washington Post poll nearly 6 in 10 American support a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented.

"If House Republicans are really concerned about me taking too many executive actions, the best solution to that is passing bills. Pass a bill. Solve a problem. Don't just say no on something that everybody agrees needs to be done," he said. "Because if we pass a bill, that will supplant whatever I've done administratively. We'll have a structure there that works, and it will be permanent, and people can make plans and businesses can make plans based on the law, and there will be clarity, both here inside this country and outside it."

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/obama-announce-unilateral-action-immigration/story?id=24368748>