

Obama Asks Homeland Security Secretary to Delay Deportation Review

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WASHINGTON — [President Obama](#) has directed the secretary of Homeland Security to delay until after the summer a deportation enforcement review that officials feared would anger House Republicans and doom any lingering hopes for an immigration overhaul in Congress this year, officials said Tuesday night.

Jeh Johnson, the secretary of Homeland Security, has spent the last two months searching for ways that the president could legally shield some of the 11 million immigrants in the country illegally from deportation. Among the ideas was new guidance for law enforcement officers to focus on people who have committed serious crimes or who are caught on the border.

Some immigration activists have demanded that the president take even bolder actions to reduce deportations. But senior White House officials said the president was worried that any action would be viewed by House Republicans as an abuse of executive power and would fuel the already intense opposition to a more long-lasting solution to the country's immigration problems.

“There are a number of folks suggesting that anything that the administration does could become an excuse for inaction in the House,” said Cecilia Muñoz, the director of the White House Domestic Policy Council and the president's top immigration adviser.

Ms. Muñoz said Mr. Obama decided to put off any recommendations arising from Mr. Johnson's review of deportation policy to give lawmakers one more chance to negotiate a compromise on an immigration overhaul. The Senate has already passed a bipartisan bill, but House Republicans have balked, saying it does not do enough to secure the border and goes too far in providing a path to citizenship for people who broke the law to get here.

Officials said that Mr. Johnson would continue to conduct his review, which includes conversations with a variety of interest groups. But they said he would not present any findings to the president for several months. The Associated Press first reported the president's decision to delay the review.

“The president has been saying for months that he believes there is a real possibility for action in the House, and that the best window is over the next couple of months,” Ms. Muñoz said. “We have to keep the pressure on.”

Mr. Obama had hoped that opposition to an immigration overhaul among House Republicans would soften after the Republican primaries this spring, officials said, and that the lawmakers

might be willing to compromise before the general election season begins in earnest in September.

But the president's optimism has been tested in recent months as opposition to an immigration overhaul in the House has solidified among some Republicans. In January, Speaker John A. Boehner of Ohio unveiled a set of principles that he said could guide a Republican immigration overhaul, but they were roundly rejected by many of his own members.

Since then, Mr. Boehner has repeatedly suggested that there is little appetite among House Republicans for anything like the bill passed by the Senate. But he has also mocked members of his caucus for not having the courage to tackle a tough issue like immigration. In comments during an appearance in his home district in April, he mimicked some Republicans saying: "[Oooh, don't make me do this](#). Oooh, this is too hard."

Ms. Muñoz said Mr. Johnson briefed the president on his deportation review last week. At that meeting, Mr. Obama told Mr. Johnson to continue the review, but to hold off making any recommendations.

That decision may expose a split among those advocating on behalf of immigrants.

The decision should please some immigrant advocates, who have been worried that any aggressive move to ease deportations would backfire in Congress.

"During this interim, we strongly urge President Obama and his administration to allow for this process to take place before issuing administrative action," several advocacy groups said in a statement on Tuesday. "We believe the president should move cautiously and give the House leadership all of the space they may need to bring legislation to the floor for a vote."

But leaders of immigrant youth groups said they were outraged at the decision to postpone action that was expected to slow the pace of deportations.

"Now they want us to cater to the Republicans' strategy of death-by-delay for immigration reform and continue to put our families at risk," said Lorella Praeli, a leader of United We Dream, a national network of young immigrants. "The time for space has come and gone."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/28/us/obama-asks-homeland-security-secretary-to-delay-deportation-review.html>