

# Schumer: Obama will act on immigration if GOP doesn't

By [Alexander Bolton](#) - 05/22/14 01:38 PM EDT

Senate Democratic leaders say President Obama will act unilaterally to reform the nation's immigration system if House Republicans fail to pass legislation by the end of July.

"They have about a six-week window, from June 10 after the last Republican primary until the August recess. If they don't pass immigration reform then, the president will have no choice but to act on his own," said Sen. Charles Schumer (N.Y.), the third-ranking Senate Democratic leader and author of the comprehensive Senate immigration reform proposal.

"The only blame will fall on the House Republicans who against the wishes of their party and the American people who are just following Steve King's dictates and refusing to move," he said, referring to Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), an outspoken opponent of increasing immigration flows.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said Democrats' highest priority for reform is to reunify the families of illegal immigrants that have been split by deportations.

"There is no demographic group in the world that believes in family unification more than Hispanics," Reid said. "That's my first goal, I think should be our first goal. The way to do that once and for all is to pass comprehensive immigration reform."

Democrats noted that 329 days have gone by since the Senate passed its reform bill, which exceeded 1,000 pages and addressed border security, interior enforcement, work visas and granted a pathway to citizenship to millions of immigrants.

Republican critics say the bill did not go far enough to secure the border and could hurt citizens looking for work.

"Three hundred and twenty-nine days ago Senate Democrats voted unanimously to double the supply of low-wage guest workers for corporations," said Stephen Miller, a spokesman for Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.).

He noted a Congressional Budget Office finding that the bill could increase unemployment and reduce wages.

Obama recently ordered the Department of Homeland Security to make its enforcement of immigration law more sensitive to the negative impact it may have on the families of immigrants living in the country illegally.

Advocates for better treatment of illegal immigrants expect the department will issue new guidance to ease the deportation of illegal immigrants whose family members are citizens or settled U.S. residents.

Senate Democrats say Obama will have no choice but to embrace these new guidelines and other administrative changes to immigration law if House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) does not move legislation by the August recess.

Boehner and other House Republicans say they are reluctant to pass immigration reform because they do not trust Obama to enforce provisions intended to increase border security and police illegal immigrants in the country.

Schumer rejected that argument by pointing to Obama's record on deportations.

"The president has been tougher on deportations than any president before him and many people in the community don't like that," said Schumer.

Janet Murguía, the president of the National Council of La Raza, a Latino advocacy group, dubbed Obama "the deporter-in-chief" in March.

Reid and Schumer reiterated their proposal to delay the enactment date of immigration reform until after Obama leaves office to mollify Republican concerns that he would undermine the legislation's enforcement provisions.

"Delaying implementation of immigration reform is not my preference but I feel so strongly this bill needs to get done, I'm willing to show flexibility. I'm willing to do whatever I can to help pass this important bill," he said. "It's my hope Republicans will consider this offer."

Reid says if Republicans reject it, "we're going to suggest that there's never going to be a time when House Republicans are willing to act on immigration."

Schumer said House Republican leaders have yet to indicate whether that could help move a deal.

Senate Democrats said a possible House vote on the Enlist Act, which would grant citizenship to immigrants who came to the country at a young age and serve in the military, falls well short of their demands. Boehner has discussed bringing it to the floor.

"We are not going to go along with minor fixes that fail to address the huge systematic problems of our immigration system today. If the oil is leaking in your car, your muffler has a hole in it and you have a flat tire, you don't change the windshield wipers," Schumer said. "But that's what they want to do with this ENLIST Act.

"It doesn't even scratch the surface of our immigration system," he added.

Read more: <http://thehill.com/homenews/senate/206983-schumer-obama-will-act-unilaterally-on-immigration-reform>