

GOP Senator Grassley still blocking Irish and hi-tech immigration bill in US Senate

By Niall O'Dowd

The Irish Central, March 12, 2012

<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/GOP-Senator-Grassley-still-blocking-Irish-and-hi-tech-immigration-bill-in-US-Senate--142298295.html>

Republican Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa continues to block passage of an E3 immigration bill for Ireland, and a hi-tech bill for India, China as well as some higher quotas for Hispanics.

Grassley had looked likely to do a deal with both Democrats and members of his own party, but hopes for that have now faded according to sources who spoke with IrishCentral.

The man on the spot appears to be Massachusetts Senator Scott Brown who stated a few weeks ago that the E3 bill was 'ready to pop'. However, there has been no significant developments since.

It was felt that Brown, who is facing a tough re-election battle in Massachusetts, would gain considerable Irish American support there by passing an E3 bill. Indeed, Brown had received very positive reaction at an Irish event he attended with Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny in Boston a few weeks ago.

But Grassley has apparently refused to work out a compromise with Brown on the bill which could damage Brown back home.

'It's one thing to verbally come out and support it, which is great, but there has to be follow through,' said James Gallagher, head of the United Irish Counties of Massachusetts. 'We've been led down the primrose path before.'

A major renewed effort with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell involved is seen as the only way forward now by proponents of the Irish bill.

The E3 visa would allow up to 10,000 Irish workers a year to come on non-immigrant visas that could be renewed every two years. Twenty other countries have visa bil deals with the US but Ireland has none.

Senator Charles Schumer of New York has linked the fate of the Irish bill to the hi-tech bill which has already passed the House. Schumer has 53 Democratic votes behind his bill which is similar to Senator Brown's.