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Tea Party Vs. The Tech World: Is Immigration Reform Dead In 2014?

A few days ago I ventured into the Lecheria rail yard just north of Mexico City. Two security guards carrying shotguns trailed in the distance behind me as I made my way down the tracks. I met Carlos Ballestros, a 25-year-old who was born in Honduras but moved to the Bronx at age five and lived there until he was deported last year. "I'm going to cross in Laredo and go all the way back to New York," he told me. Thinking about his hometown, he listed "Fat Joe, French Montana," as his favorite rappers. Ballestros is leading a group of migrants from Honduras on the train known as La Bestia. There are two children traveling with him.

As the U.S. Congress stalls on immigration reform, tens of thousands of migrants continue to travel north through Mexico, intent on reaching the U.S.. While House Republicans postpone the debate, corporate leaders are pushing to make immigration reform a reality. As the Tea Party entrenches its position, it remains to be seen, however, if immigration reform will happen in 2014.

Mark Zuckerberg, the billionaire CEO of Facebook has [voiced his opinion](#) that immigration reform is "one of the biggest civil rights issues of our time." I talked to Jorge Andradde, a Mexican human rights activist, who told me that the growing number of adolescent Central American migrants being held in detention facilities along the U.S. border is a "humanitarian crisis." Still, as House Republicans focus on other issues push back the debate on immigration, the U.S. has failed to take action to reform its immigration laws.

This is a regional (hemispheric) issue, but it is playing out within the U.S. political system, in a battle that is increasing pitching the titans of the tech world against the stalwart conservatives of the Tea Party. It's a complicated problem that involves the separate issues of family reunification, the expansion of the labor pool for skilled jobs, and the humanitarian issue of refugees fleeing violence in Central America.

Executives from construction industry giants such as Caterpillar, tech companies such as Intel and IBM, and restaurant chains such as McDonald's and Wendy's have long acted as proponents for immigration reform. Corporate America does not appear to be giving up the fight yet.

Tom Donohue, the president of the US Chamber of Commerce has [said](#), "I don't believe that immigration is dead."

Stephen Yale-Loehr, an immigration law professor at [Cornell University](#) Law School [explained](#) that while the defeat of Virginia Congressman and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor to a Tea Party challenger "does not determine the fate of immigration reform...it does make it harder for Republicans to do anything before the August recess."

Roy Beck, president of Numbers USA, a group that advocates for less immigration, said he thinks Cantor's defeat is a sign that too many politicians may be catering to corporate leaders at the expense of wage earners. "There aren't enough rich people and there aren't enough businesspeople to elect people to office," he [said](#).

Pro-reform advocates, however, have not given up hope. Congressman Luis Gutiérrez, a pro immigration Illinois Democrat [said](#), "Immigration reform is not dead. It might just be moving to the White House for action if none comes from this House."

Although Cantor lost his re-election bid, reform advocates point to the failures of other Tea Party hardline candidates. For instance, the staunchly anti-immigration Tom Tancredo lost his primary run-off for the Colorado Republican gubernatorial ticket against Bob Beauprez, a more moderate Republican who had been endorsed by Mitt Romney. Writing for *The [Washington Post](#)*, Jennifer Rubin [explained](#), "Attacking immigrants with inflammatory language and opposing any immigration reform bill turned out not to be the recipe for success in Colorado."

Still, it remains to be seen whether Congress will move forward with immigration reform over the next few weeks.

Immigration researcher [Philip Wolgin](#), from the Center for American Progress told me "We have such little time before July ends. We want to see them introduce legislation. The House can move pretty quickly. In theory they could do it in a week, but they have to take the first step of putting it on the agenda."

If Congress doesn't act, the conversation will shift to what President [Barack Obama](#) can do from the White House.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanielparishflannery/2014/06/30/tea-party-vs-the-tech-world-is-immigration-reform-dead-in-2014/>