



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 22, 2014

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## Boehner and House Republicans Aim to Pass Immigration Bill by Summer

Speaker of the House John Boehner, speaking to a group of donors at a Republican Party fundraiser last month, pledged that the House would pass several immigration bills this summer. Several attendees at the fundraiser told the *Wall Street Journal's* Laura Meckler that Boehner said he was “hellbent on getting this done this year.”

One of Boehner’s House colleagues, Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.), who is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said during a recent trip to Silicon Valley that legislative action this year was “entirely possible,” with the House likely voting this summer on five to seven immigration bills. Carl Guardino, chief executive of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, which hosted Goodlatte’s visit, related the congressman’s statement to the *Journal*.

On April 18, Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) issued a statement expressing his apprehension about a possible House immigration vote. After noting that President Obama and congressional Democrats have “put their collective weight behind an immigration bill that delivers a sweeping amnesty for open borders groups and a huge guest worker surge for corporations,” Sessions observed that — according to the *Wall Street Journal* report — “House GOP leaders are considering a plan to move an apparently similar immigration plan this summer.”

Sessions warned that the move that the House Republican leadership seems intent on taking would be bad on several counts. The first of these is political: Since public trust in President Obama is at a record low, holding a vote on the type of immigration bills likely to be introduced would amount to a reversal of the position the GOP took before the primary season. Such an about face would “represent a colossal breach of the public trust,” maintained the senator, because American workers count on Republicans to protect their jobs from guest workers and illegal immigrants.

Instead of helping the Obama administration pass legislation that would be detrimental to Americans, said Sessions, “Republicans must expose the harm the Administration has done — not join it in delivering a hammer blow to the middle class.”

In his news release, Sessions invited the voters to compare the White House-favored bill already passed by the Senate with its House counterpart, H.R. 15, and included a link to remarks the senator made on January 30 as an aid in making this comparison ([click here](#)).

In his January statement, issued after House GOP Leaders released a set of immigration



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principles/talking points, Sessions said that “the leadership talking points look like an attempted repackaging of the tired Gang-of-Eight-style formula that has been proposed, rejected, and re-proposed for years.”

H.R. 15, the “Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act,” has some glaring major flaws. A review of the bill by the Federation for American Immigration Reform notes:

Democrats describe the legislation as the Senate Gang of Eight’s bill with alternative “border security” provisions. As put by [Nancy] Pelosi herself, H.R. 15 contains the “best of the Senate bill,” without the Corker-Hoeven “border surge” amendment, and with the McCaul-Jackson Lee border bill (H.R. 1417) in its place. Which “border security” provisions the bill contains, however, is completely irrelevant given that: (1) neither actually takes any real steps to secure our nation’s borders, and (2) the bill still contains S. 744’s core amnesty-first, enforcement-later (probably never) approach.

Sessions also made a strong statement about the Gang of Eight’s bill after it was passed last June by a 68 to 32 vote:

This proposal would economically devastate low-income American citizens and current legal immigrants. It will pull down their wages and reduce their job prospects. Including those legalized, this bill would result in at least 30 million new foreign workers over a 10-year period — more than the entire population of the state of Texas.

In contrast, President Obama praised the vote, stating: “Today, with a strong bipartisan vote, the United States Senate delivered for the American people, bringing us a critical step closer to fixing our broken immigration system once and for all.”

Among the senators who opposed the Gang of Eight bill were Sessions (naturally), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), and Ted Cruz (R-Texas). Among those voting for it were Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and both Arizona Republicans, John McCain and Jeff Flake. Rubio, McCain, and Flake were among the Gang of Eight who hammered out the bill. The other members were Sens. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.)

In criticizing House Republican plans to schedule a vote on a bill based on the Senate bill, Sessions echoes similar sentiments expressed by Cruz in January, when he blasted his Republican colleagues in the House for crafting an immigration plan that he denounced as “amnesty.” “I think it would be a mistake if House Republicans were to support amnesty for those here illegally,” he said when asked about a proposal to be included in the House Republicans’ immigration principles statement.

“In my view we need to secure the borders, we need to stop illegal immigration,” Cruz said during a Bloomberg News breakfast. “And we need to improve and streamline legal immigration.”

As for whether the House will follow through on a group of immigration bills this summer, some analysts have pointed to the recent phone conversation between House Majority Leader Eric Cantor and President Obama on April 16 to discuss immigration legislation as an indication that the House and the president are at odds and unlikely to cooperate. Earlier in the day, the president had criticized the GOP’s inaction, asserting, “The majority of Americans are ahead of House Republicans on this crucial issue.”

Following his conversation with Obama, Cantor made the following statement:

Today, President Obama called me to discuss his desire for comprehensive immigration reform. The



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President called me hours after he issued a partisan statement which attacked me and my fellow House Republicans and which indicated no sincere desire to work together. After five years, President Obama still has not learned how to effectively work with Congress to get things done. You do not attack the very people you hope to engage in a serious dialogue. I told the President the same thing I told him the last time we spoke. House Republicans do not support Senate Democrats' immigration bill and amnesty efforts, and it will not be considered in the House. I also reiterated to the President there are other issues where we can find common ground, build trust and get America working again. I hope the President can stop his partisan messaging, and begin to seriously work with Congress to address the issues facing working middle class Americans who are struggling to make ends meet in this economy.

While Cantor's statement may have served as good cheerleading for the Republican team, his description of the Gang of Eight-crafted Senate bill as the "Senate Democrats' immigration bill and amnesty efforts" is, in itself, partisan grandstanding. Perhaps Cantor has forgotten that the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 (S. 744) was a *bipartisan* creation formed by a committee that included John McCain, the GOP's 2008 presidential standard bearer.

As one indication of the type of legislation that the GOP-controlled House will consider this summer, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) is drafting legislation that "would give qualifying undocumented immigrants legal status and the chance to apply for citizenship through existing channels."

House leaders have advised Diaz-Balart to have the legislation ready to go for possible debate in June or July, the *Journal* was told by an unnamed aide.

Despite the *Journal's* use of the euphemisms "undocumented immigrants" for illegal aliens and "legal status" for amnesty, that is exactly what such legislation would accomplish.

Considering that the strongest opposition to immigration legislation that includes amnesty has come from the Senate, where Republicans are the minority, it appears that securing a majority position in Congress for the GOP does not necessarily serve to present much of an opposition to the Obama administration's efforts to open our borders to a flood of illegal immigrants.

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