



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 1, 2013

“Gang of 8” Member Graham Says “We’ve Got a Deal.”

In an Easter Sunday [interview with Candy Crowley](#), on CNN’s *State of the Union* program, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C., shown) said that an agreement on an immigration reform plan has been reached by the bipartisan “Gang of Eight” senators.

Crowley noted that “big unions” and “big business” (referring to ongoing negotiations between the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce) had agreed on a visa plan for low-skilled workers and asked Graham, “Is that it, have you got a deal now?”



Graham replied:

“I think we’ve got a deal. We’ve got to write the legislation, but 2013, I hope, will be the year that we pass bipartisan immigration reform, signed into law with three goals.”

Graham described his three goals as follows:

To do the bill in such a fashion to prevent a third wave of illegal immigration from happening in this country.

To make sure that the guest worker program is available to employers who can’t find an American worker, once you offer the job at a competitive wage.

And turn our chain migration family-based immigration system into a merit — based immigration system with a family component, ‘cause with our declining demographic we’re gonna need new workers coming to this country in the out years as our population declines....

Stopping that third wave means securing your border and controlling who gets a job in America. I think we’ve accomplished that in this bill and I believe it will pass.

Crowley asked: “So as far as you know, has the whole so-called “Gang of Eight” — four Republicans, four Democrats — in the Senate, are they ready, you’ve all agreed to everything, you’ve just got to write it up and do you believe that that bill could pass the House?”

“Yes, M’am,” replied Graham. “It’s got to be written up, we haven’t signed off, there are a few details yet, but conceptually we have an agreement between business and labor, between ourselves, it has to be drafted, it will be rolled out next week. Yes, I believe it will pass the House because it secures our borders, it controls who gets a job — as to 11 million, they will have a pathway to citizenship, but it will be earned, it will be long, and it will be hard, and I think it is fair, and the main thing, the combination of events in this bill will prevent a third wave of illegal immigration, and replace a broken immigration with a merit-based economic-based system to help grow our economy in the future. I think it will pass both houses. We’re gonna need the President’s support. I’m proud of the work product and I look forward to rolling it out.”

Graham was not the only “Gang of Eight” member talking about the group’s immigration plan. Speaking Sunday on *Meet the Press*, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), also said that a deal was imminent.



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“With the agreement between business and labor, every major policy issue has been resolved on the gang of eight,” Schumer was quoted by the [Huffington Post](#), who said that the disagreement between business and labor (also mentioned by Candy Crowley) has been overcome. “Now everyone, we’ve all agreed that we’re not going to come to a final agreement until we see draft legislative language and we all agree on that. We’ve drafted some of it already, the rest will be drafted this week. So I’m very optimistic that we will have an agreement among the eight of us next week.”

The *Huffington Post* reported that an agreement had been reached on Friday, with Schumer’s help, between the AFL-CIO and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. However, the *Post* reported receiving an e-mailed statement from AFL-CIO spokesman Jeff Hauser that took exception to some of the statements made by Sen. Graham in his State of the Union interview:

“It is disappointing that on Easter Sunday, Lindsey Graham would suggest that he would stop re-uniting families and instead seek to further [privatize] the immigration system,” said Hauser. “Supposedly pro-family values Republicans should understand that ‘merit’ is not something determined by the highest bidder in a country built on family and defined by its commitment to equality.”

A statement from another “Gang of Eight” senator, Marco Rubio (R.-Fla.), urged a word of caution to those who conclude that the group’s final plan is a done deal.

“Reports that the bipartisan group of eight senators have agreed on a legislative proposal are premature,” Rubio was quoted in an [ABC OTUS News](#) report.

“Eight senators from seven states have worked on this bill to serve as a starting point for discussion about fixing our broken immigration system,” said Rubio. “But arriving at a final product will require it to be properly submitted for the American people’s consideration, through the other 92 senators from 43 states that weren’t part of this initial drafting process.”

The plan being discussed by the senators would create a new “W” visa program that would go into effect on April 1, 2015, which would apply to low-skilled jobs. Twenty thousand workers would be allowed in under the plan during the first year; 35,000 during the second year; 55,000 during the third; and 75,000 in the fourth year. However, the program may eventually be expanded to include as many as 200,000 workers a year.

Photo of Sen. Lindsey Graham: AP Images



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