



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on January 22, 2013

Harry Reid on Immigration Reform: Citizenship Must Be Served

Immigration reform is becoming one of the more contentious issues now entering Washington's political arena, as a new congressional session commences and as President Obama kicks off his second term. Of course, so-called immigration reform comprises a broad array of beliefs that have led to a persistent clash among Republican and Democratic lawmakers, which will likely shift some weight away from the economy toward the millions of illegal immigrants residing in America.



Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) is now laying an uncompromising provision on any immigration reform proposals — and that is, without a path to citizenship, no legislation will come to the table. “There will be nothing done in my Senate [on immigration reform] without a pathway to citizenship,” the Nevada Democrat [told](#) the *Las Vegas Sun* late last week.

“We have spent a huge amount of money on border security, and both our northern and southern borders are more secure,” Reid explained. “Frankly, Mexico is doing much better economically, and that has helped the issue a lot. We can’t build a fence of 3,000 miles because no matter how high we build it, they can build a ladder taller than that fence. So I think we have about expended our energy on border security.”

Reid may be correct that illegal immigration has slowed in 2012, but few experts would attribute the slowing mainly to an increasingly secure border. Most sources mainly attribute it to a weak American economy, especially since about half of illegal immigrants arrive on short-term visas and then overstay their visas.

The Senate Majority Leader says legislation relating to immigration reform is one of top two issues for this congressional session, as he works alongside Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) on a bipartisan slate of principles to bolster the looming debate that they plan to ignite by the end of the month.

“People will have to move to the back of line. They would have to pay some penalties and fines, and they have to work, stay out of trouble and work on speaking English,” asserted Reid, providing generic provisions for a pathway to citizenship for the millions of U.S. immigrants who are without legal residency. “That would bring people out of the shadows and really help everybody. It would be good for family reunification.”

Reid, who credited his 2010 reelection to the Hispanic vote, has been a [longtime supporter](#) of the [DREAM Act](#), a legislative proposal that would provide permanent residency to illegal residents who graduated from U.S. high schools, came to the U.S. as minors, and resided in the country continuously for a minimum of five years prior to the bill’s enactment.

Reid told the *Las Vegas Sun* that he is not opposed to E-Verify — a federal system for employers to



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validate the citizenship of job applicants — but noted that the system would have to be utilized more widely to be effective. “We have to make the employer sanctions not a Catch-22,” he affirmed. “No one can do it right. If you are an employer, you have trouble, and if you are an employee, you have trouble. So these are some of the things we need to work on that are totally doable if there is a will. That’s why I hope McCain sticks with it, because it will be a great legacy for him.”

Meanwhile, the Obama administration is seeking a plan that supposedly would require immigrants who have entered the country illegally or have overstayed their visas to prove they’ve lived in the United States for several years, will pay any back taxes that are owed, and have not committed any crimes. But the amnesty of 1986 and other amnesties since then indicate that [such provisions will be ignored](#), and amnesty will [encourage more illegal immigration](#). Also, entering America illegally and not paying taxes are both crimes (the latter of which could land an American citizen in jail for many years — ask Wesley Snipes). Illegal immigrants who qualify through these provisions will benefit from temporary legal status that could potentially lead to citizenship in about 15 years.

However, Harry Reid and the Obama administration’s plans for immigration reform will likely meet resistance in the Republican-controlled House, where GOP lawmakers are hesitant to grant citizenship to any of the 11 million illegal immigrants who could become U.S. citizens. Republican House Judiciary Chairman Robert Goodlatte (R-Va.) attested that he is unlikely to sign on to a citizenship-inclusive bill, but would be open to providing noncitizen legal status to illegal immigrants.

“I would not be likely to agree to a pathway to citizenship for 10, 11 million people who are illegally in the United States,” Goodlatte [told](#) C-SPAN. “But I would be willing to look at proposals that deal with the fact that they are here, and that knowing who they are, where they are and giving them some kind of legal status — probably without a pathway to citizenship — is something that is certainly worth talking about.”

But most proposals steer clear of the more critical issues at hand, as they remain narrow in scope while ignoring some of other workable solutions. For instance, the Mexican immigrant population in the United States alone is [larger than the immigrant populations](#) of any other country, leading to Balkanization, and because these Mexicans are generally poor and uneducated, [we are importing poverty](#).

Ron Paul proposed a [six-point plan](#) during the Republican presidential contest that addressed a variety of solutions, including physically securing our borders and coastlines, enforcing visa rules, no amnesty, no welfare for illegal aliens, ending birthright citizenship, and passing true immigration reform.

The current immigration system is incoherent and unfair, Paul asserts. However, most reform proposals would grant access to [60 million more](#) immigrants into the country, according to the Heritage Foundation. The more sensible solution is a system grounded with the same rules and waiting periods for all immigrants seeking to enter the United States.

“We must reject amnesty for illegal immigrants in any form,” Paul previously [stated](#), addressing the numerous proposals offered up by Washington lawmakers. “We cannot continue to reward lawbreakers and expect things to get better. If we reward millions who came here illegally, surely millions more will follow suit. Ten years from now we will be in the same position, with a whole new generation of lawbreakers seeking amnesty.”



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