



Obama Chief of Staff Pledges Executive Action on Immigration

In a meeting September 11 with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough (shown) promised the congressmen that President Obama will act on immigration “reform” before the end of 2014.



The end-of-year timetable coincides with a White House statement issued September 6, saying that President Obama “believes it would be harmful” to his immigration policy to announce any administrative action on immigration before this November’s elections.

That statement represented a retreat, of sorts, from the administration’s pledge, made last June, to implement Obama’s “immigration reform” program by “executive authority” before the end of summer.

“We’re not just going to sit around and wait interminably for Congress,” White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, stated. “We’ve been waiting a year already. The president has tasked his Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson with reviewing what options are available to the president, what is at his disposal using his executive authority to try to address some of the problems that have been created by our broken immigration system.”

The presidential decision to act unilaterally stemmed from Obama’s growing impatience with the House of Representatives’ refusal to vote on the bipartisan “Gang of Eight” immigration bill passed by the Senate on June 27, 2013. Conservative Republicans objected to the Senate bill’s granting of “a path to citizenship” (amnesty) to illegal immigrants.

However, between June — when the White House threatened to pass “immigration reform” through executive action by summer’s end — and September, when Obama (blaming “the Republicans’ extreme politicization of this issue,” for delaying action until after the November elections) the political climate changed considerably. The crisis caused by the massive surge of illegal immigrant children across our southern borders made many Americans much less inclined to accept “reform” that included amnesty for illegal aliens. With control of the Senate at stake, some Democratic senators asked Obama to hold off on his executive actions, for fear they would alienate enough voters to harm Democrats running for election.

The president’s plan to hold off until after November drew criticism not only from Republicans, as expected, but also from those who favor direct presidential action to being about their desired “reform,” which usually includes some form of amnesty.

Among the critics of the delayed action was Arturo Carmona, the executive director of Presente.org (whose mission is “to advance Latino power and create winning campaigns that amplify Latino voices”) who called Obama’s turnabout “a betrayal” of the Latino community and “shameful.” Carmona said the



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president “is once again demonstrating that for him, politics come before the lives of Latino and immigrant families.”

It was evidently to calm the president’s usual political allies who were angered by his September 6 announcement that McDonough met with members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus to discuss the president’s plan.

Representatives who attended the meeting said that McDonough listened to their concerns and renewed the president’s commitment to act even if things turn worse politically, such as if Democrats lose the Senate or Obama once again faces pressure to put off his decision.

“We told [McDonough] we were mad, we thought for sure [Obama] was going to act because he said he would, we’re very upset about that,” said Rep. Juan Vargas (D-Calif.) “At the same time we got the promise that he’s going to act as generously as he possibly can before the end of the holiday season.”

McDonough told the press, AP reported: “It was good to catch up with the caucus and underscore to them our continuing commitment to resolve the challenges with our broken immigration system and underscore to them that the president will act on this before the end of the year.”

“The president understands the depth of the broken immigration system that we have and he’s bound and determined to make sure that we fix it because it’s impacting our economy, it’s impacting our job growth and it’s a humanitarian issue that’s impacting families across the country,” McDonough told reporters.

The White House has promised action “of significant scope,” AP quoted Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) as saying.

“No more excuses. I don’t care what senator is dangling in the wind, I don’t care what Republican proposal is being put forward, I don’t care what happens, we are moving forward,” Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) told the press. “The holiday season must be a season of blessings for millions of undocumented families across America.”

While no one knows for sure how far Obama will go, those “blessings” may include protecting millions of illegal immigrants from deportation, and granting them work permits allowing them to work legally in this country.

One indication that the political winds have shifted on the immigration issue is that Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), one of the “Gang of Eight” who helped draft the 2013 bill that included provisions for amnesty, sent President Obama a letter on August 27 saying that he no longer agreed with a “comprehensive” approach to the immigration problem that includes pairing border security with a years-long path for illegal aliens to eventually obtain citizenship (a.k.a., amnesty).

Rubio said he also told the president he should cancel a rumored plan to expand unilateral amnesty granted under the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to individuals who came to the United States illegally as minors. The expansion may include as many as five million people. “If the president goes through with this executive action that he’s threatening, not only does it raise very serious constitutional issues but in my opinion it sets back the cause of reform for a long time,” Rubio said in an exclusive interview with Mathew Boyle of Breitbart News on August 26.

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