



Conservatives in Congress Slam Immigration Bill of “Gang of Eight”

Conservative members of Congress, including Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas) and Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), have expressed sharp criticism of the 844-page immigration bill filed on the Senate floor on April 17 by the bipartisan “Gang of Eight.”

“It’s hard to believe, but the Senate immigration bill is worse than we thought,” said Smith, in a statement quoted by [CNS News](#). “Despite assurances, the border is not secured before almost everyone in the country illegally is given amnesty. The bill guarantees there will be a rush across the border to take advantage of massive amnesty.”

Smith continued,

And the Senate proposal offers amnesty to far more illegal immigrants than we thought. In addition to most of the 11 million illegal immigrants already in the country, the bill offers to legalize the relatives of illegal immigrants outside the U.S. and even others who have already been deported back home. So current immigration laws are shredded.

The Senate bill is bad news for the American people. The good news is that the House Judiciary Committee will come up with a better plan that improves our immigration system and puts the interests of American workers first.

A report from the [Daily Caller](#) on April 18 pointed out that the immigration bill includes approximately “400 exemptions, exceptions, waivers, determinations and grants of discretion.”

Citing the text of the bill, the article noted that discretion would be used in determining the status of “an alien who departed from the United States while subject to an order of exclusion, deportation, or removal.”

The presence of conservative opposition to the immigration bill was reported in a [Huffington Post](#) article on April 18 that discussed the reception that Gang of Eight member Marco Rubio received while appearing on talk radio’s *The Mark Levin Show* on April 17. The *Post* writer wrote that Levin’s “skepticism [of the immigration bill] was clear,” and added that Levin, who once served as chief of staff to President Reagan’s Attorney General Edwin Meese, “referred to undocumented immigrants as ‘illegal aliens,’ ” — instead of noting that Rubio is now using the word “undocumented” to refer to illegal aliens.

While Levin listened politely as Rubio stated his case, he was unconvinced and the following morning [posted this note](#) on his Facebook page: “Count me out: the border is NOT secured and Obama cannot be trusted, period.”

The *Post* report also quoted Heritage Foundation President and former South Carolina Senator Jim





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DeMint, who supported Rubio's senatorial campaign in 2010. "After decades of empty promises on immigration enforcement, Congress simply lacks credibility to keep its promises," said DeMint. He described the Gang of Eight bill as "immediate amnesty in the form of provisional status within months and lofty promises of 'strategies' and 'plans' for enforcement years later."

A Reuters report on April 19 said that the debate over the bill in Congress would begin that day with a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee. It added that now that details of the proposed legislation have emerged, conservatives who have remained silent so far will begin their campaign against the bill, utilizing social media, talk shows, and other lobbying methods.

Reuters quoted Roy Beck, head of Numbers USA (a group favoring low immigration levels), as saying,

Everything in this bill says we have a labor shortage. It's proposing adding millions more foreign workers over the next decade alone. We have 20 million Americans who can't find a full-time job. It's as if the Gang of Eight lives in an alternate universe.

Reuters also quoted from a blog at the Heritage Foundation website posted by former Senator DeMint, who pointed out:

At a time of trillion-dollar deficits and \$17 trillion in debt, the cost of implementing amnesty and the strain it will add to already fragile entitlement and welfare programs should be of serious concern for everyone.

The report also carried this statement from Senator Sessions:

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.

A report in the [Washington Post](#) on April 17, the day the immigration bill was filed in the Senate, said that opponents of the bill might use delaying tactics to hold up the measure and to allow time for "poison pill" amendments that would render it too unacceptable to gain passage.

The article included a [link to the full text of the bill](#), as well as brief summaries of what it proposed. For example, under the "path to citizenship," "Most of the 11 million people who are in the country illegally could apply for a green card after 10 years and citizenship three years after that." In the "H-1B high-skilled visas" section, "visas for highly skilled engineers and computer programmers would double from 65,000 to 110,000. In future years, the cap could rise to as much as 180,000." And in the "guest worker category," there would be a "new visa program for 20,000 foreigners in low-skilled jobs starting in 2015," and the "number of visas [would increase] to 75,000 in 2019." After the year 2020, visa caps would be limited to "no more than 200,000 annually."

Under the "farm worker H-2A program," visas for agriculture workers would be "limited to 337,000 over three years."

Sen. Charles Schumer (D.-N.Y.) filed the bill on behalf of himself and his seven Gang of Eight colleagues: Democrats Robert Menendez (N.J.), Richard Durbin (Ill.), and Michael Bennet (Colo.); and Republicans Lindsey Graham (S.C.), John McCain (Ariz.), Jeff Flake, (Ariz.), and Marco Rubio (Fla.)

An April 16 [Fox News](#) report based on an outline of the bill released to Fox the night before said that under the bill a "massive legalization program" would be combined with multi-billion-dollar expenditures to improve border security. Under the "path to citizenship" aspect of the bill — which



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conservatives more accurately label as “amnesty” — illegal aliens (aka, “undocumented immigrants”) could work in the United States under provisional status for 10 years, but would be barred from receiving federal benefits. After 10 years, they could apply for green cards, and three years after that, for citizenship.

“There’s a realization among most Republicans and Democrats that this issue needs to be addressed,” said Gang of Eight member Sen. McCain. “You can’t have 11 million people living in the shadows forever.”

But Rep. Lamar Smith expressed another view on the House floor April 12:

The Senate proposal issues an open invitation to enter the country illegally. Millions more will do so before the border is secure. The Senate proposal will dramatically increase illegal immigration.



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