



Immigration Speech: Does Obama See Himself as an Elected Dictator?

Speaking from the White House on prime-time television on November 20, President Obama did not deliver any surprises as he unveiled his plan to use executive action to grant protection from deportation to millions of illegal immigrants. After all, the administration had already repeatedly made clear its intent to rule by decree on immigration and other issues, despite the fact that under the U.S. Constitution, only Congress may make law.



Under the president's plan, two groups of illegal aliens would qualify: those who have been in the United States for more than five years; and those who have children who are American citizens or legal residents. Obama promised those who fit his criteria: "If you register, pass a criminal background check, and you're willing to pay your fair share of taxes — you'll be able to apply to stay in this country temporarily, without fear of deportation. You can come out of the shadows and get right with the law."

ABC News reported that those who qualify for deferred action through a son or daughter that is a U.S. citizen will receive immediate amnesty from deportation.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have been instructed to "immediately begin identifying persons in their custody" who meet the criteria; as well as consider the new criteria for "all individuals encountered."

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Heading off criticism from those who would label his plan for what it is — amnesty — the president said:

I know some of the critics of this action call it amnesty. Well, it's not. Amnesty is the immigration system we have today — millions of people who live here without paying their taxes or playing by the rules while politicians use the issue to scare people and whip up votes at election time.

Obama justified his use of executive authority to shield illegal aliens from deportation on the failure of Congress to pass what he termed "common sense law." "But until that happens," he said, "there are actions I have the legal authority to take as President — the same kinds of actions taken by Democratic and Republican presidents before me — that will help make our immigration system more fair and more just."

The executive action that Obama announced last night was a complete about-face from his comments on the proper use of presidential authority during a Univision Town Hall held on March 28, 2011 at Bell Multicultural High School in Washington, D.C.

When the moderator of that event presented a question, "What if at least you grant temporary protective status (TPS) to undocumented students," Obama answered, in part:

With respect to the notion that I can just suspend deportations through executive order, that's just not the case, because there are laws on the books that Congress has passed. And I know that



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everybody here at Bell is studying hard so you know that there we've got three branches of government. Congress passes the law. The Executive branch's job is to enforce and implement those laws and then the Judiciary has to interpret the laws. There are enough laws on the books by Congress that are very clear in terms on how we have to enforce our immigration system, that for me to simply though executive order ignore those congressional mandates would not conform with my appropriate role as President.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfZ3kaKZoIw>

Obama made the same point during his 2008 campaign for president at a Town Hall meeting in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in which he condemned President Bush's attempts to bypass Congress. "The biggest problems that we're facing right now have to do with George Bush trying to bring more and more power into the executive branch and not go through Congress at all, and that's what I intend to reverse when I'm president of the United States of America," he said.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3IWq3CXHyc>

From his description of his planned actions during last night's address, it is apparent that what Obama had previously stated would not conform with his "appropriate role as President" is very different from what he now deems appropriate, legal, and constitutional.

The plan drew immediate criticism from Republican members of Congress, with much of the criticism based not so much on immigration as on Obama's blatant usurpation of authority and disregard for the separation of powers he meticulously referred to in his 2011 talk at Bell School in D.C.

"[The president's] actions are not only unconstitutional and in defiance of the American people who said they did not want amnesty in the 2014 elections, but they are also unfair to every immigrant who has come to our nation legally," Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) posted on his Facebook profile.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) said he "will not sit idly by and let the President bypass Congress and our Constitution."

"President Obama is not above the law and has no right to issue executive amnesty. His actions blatantly ignore the separations of powers and the principles our country was founded on. The President has said 22 times previously that he does not have the power to legislate on immigration," Paul said in a statement.

In a November 20 article in *USA Today*, Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) wrote:

Only a short time ago, President Obama himself admitted this action would be illegal and unconstitutional: "I know some people want me to bypass Congress and change the laws on my own" he explained, adding "that's not how our democracy functions. That's not how our Constitution is written." President Obama also said that: "The problem is "that I'm the president of the United States, I'm not the emperor of the United States. My job is to execute laws that are passed."

Apparently, America now has its first emperor.

"That's just not how our democracy works," House Speaker John Boehner said in a statement after the White House released the details of Obama's plan. "The president has said before that he's 'not king' and he's 'not an emperor,' but he's sure acting like one."



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King? Emperor? How about elected dictator?

Photo: AP Images

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