



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 8, 2014

## Obama Delays Immigration Action Until After Elections

The White House issued an e-mail statement to major news organization on September 6 stating that President Obama “believes it would be harmful” to his immigration policy to announce any administrative action on immigration before this November’s elections. However, noted the statement, “The President will take action on immigration before the end of the year.”



The statement blames “the Republicans’ extreme politicization of this issue” for his delay on following through on his previously promised executive actions, offering as an example: “We have seen how Republicans have fought hard to exploit the humanitarian situation at the Rio Grande Valley.”

The above statement reverses a position taken by Obama in a statement last June 30:

I have also directed [Department of Homeland Security] Secretary [Jeh] Johnson and Attorney General [Eric] Holder to identify additional actions my administration can take on our own, within my existing legal authorities, to do what Congress refuses to do and fix as much of our immigration system as we can. If Congress will not do their job, at least we can do ours. I expect their recommendations before the end of summer and I intend to adopt those recommendations without further delay.

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The president’s reference to “the humanitarian situation at the Rio Grande Valley” refers to the 60,000 children unaccompanied by parents or relatives that the administration estimates will pour into the United States this year, up from about 6,000 in 2011. Secretary Johnson told Reuters in an interview last spring that the shortage of housing for these unaccompanied children had become so acute that an emergency shelter had been opened at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

The situation was deemed so urgent by the Obama administration that the White House issued a presidential memorandum on June 2, directing the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish an interagency “Unified Coordination Group.”

However, on June 11, the National Association of Former Border Patrol Officers (NAFBPO) released a statement asserting that the large influx of unaccompanied minors illegally crossing our border “is not a humanitarian crisis. It is a predictable, orchestrated and contrived assault on the compassionate side of Americans by her political leaders that knowingly puts minor illegal alien children at risk for purely political purposes.”

“Certainly, we are not gullible enough to believe that thousands of unaccompanied minor Central American children came to America without the encouragement, aid and assistance of the United States government,” the former officers said.



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The presidential statement drew predictable criticism from congressional Republicans, including House Speaker John A. Boehner of Ohio, who said: “The decision to simply delay this deeply controversial and possibly unconstitutional unilateral action until after the election — instead of abandoning the idea altogether — smacks of raw politics.”

Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee was also critical of Obama’s promise to act — presumably unilaterally — before the end of the year, but after the elections: “The founders of our country did not want a king, and the American people do not want a president who acts like one.” Alexander called Obama’s decision a “shameful presidential trick.”

The presidential announcement was also criticized by those who favor amnesty for illegal immigrants and were counting on Obama’s promises to accomplish this goal by executive action, as he suggested last June.

Arturo Carmona, the executive director of Presente.org (whose mission is “to advance Latino power and create winning campaigns that amplify Latino voices”) called Obama’s turnabout “a betrayal” of the Latino community and “shameful.” Carmona said the president “is once again demonstrating that for him, politics come before the lives of Latino and immigrant families.”

Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees International Union, said in a statement quoted by the *New York Times*: “Today, we are deeply disheartened that the dreams of hard-working immigrant families who have long contributed to the fabric of the American life remain in jeopardy. The White House’s decision to delay executive action forces countless families to continue to wait in the shadows of fear.”

What almost every commentator agrees on, however, is that whatever action the president might have taken prior to the elections would be politically hazardous to Democrats in Congress facing election. Of special concern to Democrats is retaining control of the Senate, which Republicans can grab by picking up a net six seats.

After the Senate passed the bipartisan, “Gang of Eight” immigration bill in June 2013, the Republican leadership in the House refused to bring up similar legislation in the House, because of the Senate bill’s granting of “a path to citizenship” (amnesty) to illegal immigrants. Frustrated by the refusal of House Republicans to allow passage of a similar bill, Obama vowed to act alone through executive action, as he did last June.

However, the highly publicized crisis that resulted from the massive flood of illegal immigrants, including thousands of unaccompanied children from Central America, changed the political landscape and made such action by the president politically risky for Democrats running for office this November.

A writer in the *New York Times* on September 7 observed:

After a summer in which a surge of Central American migrants into the United States at the southern border had reawakened public worries and anger about immigration, and with Republicans running attack ads against Democratic senators on the topic, the issue had simply become too toxic and combustible for Mr. Obama.

One of the administration’s most vocal critics on immigration policy, Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) posted a statement on his Senate website on September 6 that strongly criticized Obama’s commitment to grant amnesty to illegal aliens by means of executive actions, once the elections have passed. Sessions’ statement noted, in part:



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President Obama has openly reaffirmed his unconstitutional plan to nullify our nation's sovereign laws, issuing executive amnesty and work permits to millions of illegal immigrants. In so doing, he will wipe away American workers' lawful immigration protections. Illegal workers will be instantly allowed to take precious jobs directly from struggling Americans in every occupation in America. Countless more unlawful workers will pour across the border and overstay their visas.

Sessions also challenged Obama's motivation in delaying his action until after the elections:

President Obama's announcement that this would come only after the midterm elections is of course an attempt to protect the Senate Democrat incumbents who have enabled President's Obama lawless immigration decrees every step of the way.

Sessions was especially critical of the refusal of Democrats in the Senate to support a bill passed by the House that would block the president from continuing or expanding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive amnesty to include millions more illegal aliens.

The Alabama senator called on the American people to demand that their lawmakers — not only Republicans, but more importantly Senate Democrats — to force Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to allow a vote on the House-passed border crisis bill.

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