



Obama Pursues Plan to Implement “Immigration Reform” Unilaterally

Though the White House issued a statement on September 6 advising that President Obama “believes it would be harmful” to his immigration policy to announce any administrative action on immigration before this November’s elections, with the elections just days away the administration has scarcely paused in its quest to issue its own brand of “immigration reform.”



There are leading indicators that the administration is proceeding without delay to implement its immigration plan, including the notice posted on the “Federal Business Opportunities” website on October 3 that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is looking for vendors to produce an estimated four million green cards and alien work permits annually with the potential to buy as many as 34 million cards total — figures far in excess of current needs.

An additional look at what the administration has planned was provided by the *Wall Street Journal* on October 29 in a report that said the White House is considering two central requirements to determine which of the nation’s 11 million illegal immigrants would gain protections through an expected executive action — the first being a minimum length of time in the United States, and the other being a person’s family ties to others living in this country.

Those requirements, depending on how broadly they are drawn, could offer protection from deportation to between one million and four million people residing in this country illegally, noted the *Journal*.

The paper’s report quoted White House spokeswoman Katherine Vargas, who said that the president hasn’t made a decision on this change in immigration policy, nor has he received recommendations from his cabinet secretaries. “It is premature to speculate about the specific details,” she insisted.

When NBC News contacted the White House to obtain further details on what the *Journal* reported, an unnamed “senior administration official” confirmed the two requirements the administration would use to grant protection to some illegal immigrants, and added that the president intended to take “as broad action as possible” while trying to stay on solid enough legal ground to withstand the inevitable challenge that Republicans would be expected to make.

Obama stated his intention to continue with “immigration reform” business as usual when he told attendees at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute’s 37th Annual Awards Gala in Washington on October 2:



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I've said before that if Congress failed to live up to its responsibilities to solve this problem, I would act to fix as much of our immigration system as I can on my own, and I meant what I said. So this is not a question of if, but when.

Those remarks echoed what Obama said in a statement on June 30 when he announced that he had asked the Homeland Security secretary and his attorney general to identify additional executive actions his administration could take on its own, "to do what Congress refuses to do and fix as much of our immigration system as we can."

Obama said he would expect his cabinet members' recommendations before the end of summer and that he intended to adopt their recommendations "without further delay," but fear of his policies having fallout for Democratic senatorial candidates caused him to retreat slightly on September 6.

While the Obama administration has tried to maintain a low profile on immigration until after next Tuesday's elections, at least one Republican named as a possible contender for a presidential run in 2016 has addressed the matter openly. Former Florida governor Jeb Bush, delivering a stump speech on October 29 in Castle Rock, Colorado, supporting Republican Cory Gardner in his race against Democrat Senator Mark Udall, straddled the fence on "immigration reform."

While warning against President Obama's expected executive action to limit deportations, Bush's main point of contention with the president was apparently more on method than substance.

Instead of implementing "immigration reform" by executive action, Bush said, Congress needs to pass a bill and that a Republican-controlled Congress would solve the nation's immigration problems.

"The constitution requires Congress to pass laws, not the president," Bush said in Spanish, a language he is fluent in. If Obama acts unilaterally on immigration, Bush warned, "it will be harder to do it the appropriate way."

Bush's constitutional point was, of course, true. Obama's stated intention to implement immigration policy through executive actions circumvents the separation of powers laid down by the Constitution and usurps legislative powers granted exclusively to Congress.

However, just because a program is created constitutionally does not necessarily mean that it is good for America. In his speeches around the country on behalf of Republican candidates, Bush has used language curiously like that employed by President Obama. For example while stumping for Gov. Rick Snyder and U.S. Senate candidate Terri Lynn Land on October 13 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bush said:

If we want to create high, sustained economic growth where more people have a chance at earned success, which I think should be the driver for our philosophy as Republicans and conservatives, then fixing a broken immigration system has to be part of that.

Notice the similarity to what Obama said in his October 2 address: "I would act to fix as much of our immigration system as I can on my own."

The problem is not that our immigration system is "broken" and needs to be "fixed." The problem is that our current immigration laws, which served us well for decades, are being ignored and need to be enforced.

Photo of President Barack Obama: AP Images

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