



Obama White House Evasive on Immigration Policy Plans

As we reported on October 20, the notice posted recently by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) asking for bids for card stock that will be used to print millions of Permanent Resident Cards (commonly called “green cards”) and Employment Authorization Documentation cards (“work permits”) has caused many observers to believe that the Obama administration is planning to open the immigration floodgates right after November’s elections.



The USCIS figures indicated that the subdivision of Homeland Security will need 34,000,000 cards over the next five years — 6,800,000 annually — starting with an initial order of 4,000,000. Since the combined total of work permits and green cards issued in recent years is a little over two million, the tripling of the amount of cards needed indicates to many that the Obama administration is preparing for a “surge” in the number of aliens to be admitted.

Charlie Spierling, the White House correspondent for Breitbart News, which broke this story on October 19 based on information uncovered by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), attended Press Secretary Josh Earnest’s press conference on October 21. The official transcript on the White House website records how Earnest (shown) deflected Spierling’s question about the cards:

Q [from Charlie Spierling]: The recent story on the USCIS preparing for a surge of government IDs; do you have a response to that?

MR. EARNEST: I don’t. I’d refer you to USCIS on that. I don’t have any information about that.

Considering that USCIS is part of the Department of Homeland Security, whose secretary, Jeh Johnson, reports directly to the president, and that USCIS’s planned printing of a massive increase in these cards has received widespread media attention, would it be unreasonable to assume that the president’s press secretary would have at least a canned response to the question in his notes?

It is apparent that the White House is following through on its statement issued by e-mail to major news organizations 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.

The way Breitbart described Earnest’s treatment of their correspondent’s question in a recent headline about the press conference: “White House Punts on USCIS Request for ‘Surge’ of Immigration ID’s.”

Earlier this year, Obama was fairly candid about his intentions to bypass Congress — following an unsuccessful attempt to get the House to pass the Gang of Eight “immigration reform” legislation passed by the Senate in June 2013. In his statement made on June 30, the president declared:

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



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my existing legal authorities, to do what Congress refuses to do and fix as much of our immigration system as we can.

But then the political landscape changed.

The massive surge of illegal immigrant children across our southern borders made many Americans much less inclined to accept “reform” that included amnesty (couched in the euphemism, “path to citizenship”) for illegal immigrants. With “immigration reform” losing popularity, and 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.

And so, as noted above, the White House backed off and stopped talking about any plans to implement its agenda by executive action. However, in a parting shot, the White House statement blamed “the Republicans’ extreme politicization of this issue” for the president’s delay.

The trouble with politics, however, is that what pleases some constituencies alienates others. Following the White House statement, 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.”

The White House promptly did some damage control and during a speech before the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute’s 37th Annual Awards Gala in Washington on October 2, Obama reassured Hispanic legislators and their supporters that he remained committed to implementing through executive action immigration policies that rightfully should be approved by the legislative branch:

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.

Most observers think that the “when” may be soon after the November elections have passed, and Obama’s allies in Congress will not have to face the voters until long after his brand of “immigration reform” has transpired. But, in fact, the administration is already engaged in such actions, when it thinks it can get away with it.

On October 17, USCIS posted a release stating that beginning in early 2015, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will begin implementation of a Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program. USCIS describes how this program will work:

Under this program U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will offer certain eligible Haitian beneficiaries of already approved family-based immigrant visa petitions, who are currently in Haiti, an opportunity to come to the United States up to approximately two years before their immigrant visa priority dates become current....

Under the Haitian Family Reunification Parole program, Haitians authorized parole will be allowed to enter the United States and apply for work permits but will not receive permanent resident status any earlier.

The program, therefore, allows qualifying Haitian immigrants to jump the line and come into the United States two years before they qualify for a visa and apply for work permits — those Employment Authorization Documentation cards that USCIS plans on ordering millions of.

Upon learning about HFRP, which would allow at least 100,000 Haitian nationals to received expedited



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entry into the United States, Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) called it “an irresponsible overreach of the executive branch’s authority.”

“Which countries are next on President Obama’s list?” asked Grassley. “Will there be medical screenings before entry? Will work permits be granted automatically? How will this affect American workers?”

Grassley predicted that the number of Haitians who would come to the United States under the program would likely exceed that estimate, calling it “likely just the beginning of the president’s unilateral and executive actions on immigration.”

“Parole is meant for humanitarian assistance on a case-by-case basis,” he said. “The president’s continued push to circumvent Congressional authority and ignore the rule of law sets a bad precedent for the future.”

Photo of White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest: AP Images

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