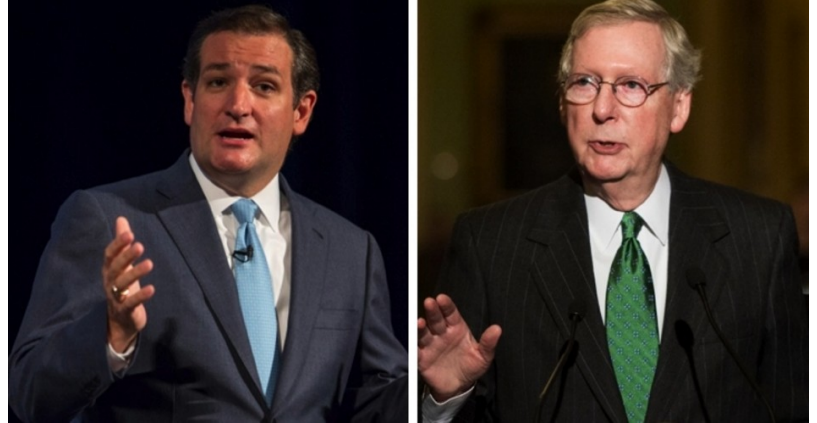




Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 22, 2015

House Conservatives Prefer Cruz Over McConnell on Immigration

At the monthly “Conversations with Conservatives” event held by the Heritage Foundation in Washington on January 21, Rep. Raúl Labrador (R-Idaho) expressed disappointment with the newly elected Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s pessimistic approach to getting House-passed immigration legislation through the Senate. Labrador called on Senators Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) to take the lead in helping get the House bills through the Senate.



The frustration with McConnell’s projected pessimism was prompted by a statement the majority leader made at a joint House-Senate GOP retreat in Hershey, Pennsylvania on January 16, in which he warned his colleagues that the new Senate Republican majority might not be enough for him to get legislation through the Senate.

“If we’re unable to do that, then we’ll let you know what comes next,” McConnell said at the retreat. What he seemed doubtful that the Senate would be able to do is to pass the amendment to the Department of Homeland Security’s funding bill passed by the House on January 14 that would deny funds for new or renewed applications for the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) program. It was one of five amendments passed to limit the Obama administration’s grants of amnesty to illegal immigrants by executive actions.

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McConnell and other Senate GOP leaders noted that it would be difficult to get the 60 votes needed to overcome Democratic procedural hurdles, including filibusters. Republicans now control the Senate with 54 votes, six short of the number needed to put an end to debate. Even conceding this political fact of life, however, conservative House Republicans would like to see McConnell wage a more aggressive battle than he seems willing to fight.

Reuters quoted Labrador’s statement at a news conference with other conservatives that it was “high time that Ted Cruz and Mike Lee and others decide that they are going to start fighting in the Senate using the Senate procedural rules, and not just looking at the House as a place where the fights are going to happen.”

“Last year the message was, ‘We cannot get our way because we don’t have a Senate [majority],’” Labrador was quoted by Breitbart as saying. “Now this year’s message is, ‘We cannot get our way, because we only have 54 votes.’ ”

“That’s not leadership. That’s not why the American people voted for us,” Labrador said.

Representative Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.), while refusing to name any specific senators, also expressed discontent with the reluctance of the Upper House leadership to step up to the plate:



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I'm speaking to our conservative counterparts ... on the Senate side, who have said time and time again, "you in the House need to do this, you in the House need to do that." Well you know what? Now it's in the Senate and they have an opportunity to shine, and to do their job.

The Hill reported that Labrador went so far as to suggest that if McConnell and Senate Republicans aren't willing to stand up to Obama, perhaps they should give the power to lead the Senate back to Minority Leader (and former Majority Leader) Harry Reid.

"It's uncanny to me that our leadership ... is already sending the message that we've already lost this battle," Labrador said at the "Conversations with Conservatives" meeting.

"It's high time that Mitch McConnell stand up and say, 'this is what we are fighting for in the Senate,'" he added. "That's definitely what he said during his campaign, so let's make sure he does it now as the majority leader."

The report in *The Hill* noted that House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) has had to contend with House conservatives critical of his leadership for some time, but so long as Harry Reid was Senate majority leader, Reid was their political adversary. Now, a different situation presents itself. Having been in the position of majority leader for only two weeks, McConnell faces criticism from congressional conservatives who are upset by reports that Republican leaders are now considering a backup plan that would separate DHS funding from efforts to reverse Obama's immigration executive action amnesty.

"The answer to every offered suggestion is, 'No, we can't do that. No, we can't take on the president. No, that will never work,'" Representative Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.) said at the "Conversations with Conservatives" event that Labrador attended.

"We didn't promise we were going to cop out," continued Huelskamp. "Plan B always seems to be not taking on this president."

As we reported yesterday, as they wait to see what actions Senate Republicans will take regarding DHS funding, House Republicans are moving forward with a border security bill, H.R. 399, the "Secure Our Borders First Act of 2015." Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) introduced the legislation last week, and his counterpart in the Senate, Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), introduced a companion bill on January 21 with Senators John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.).

The Huffington Post reported that the House Homeland Security Committee held a markup of McCaul's bill this week, and the bill is expected to go up for a vote on the House floor next week.

Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) has urged House Republicans to oppose McCaul's bill, because it does not include a number of reforms that he believes are needed to achieve what is described as "a sound immigration system." Among the bill's major flaws, says Sessions, is that it does not end "catch-and-release" of illegal immigrants and it does not require mandatory detention and return of the apprehended immigrants to their countries of origin.

HuffPost noted that while most members of Congress who attended the "Conversations with Conservatives" event didn't rule out supporting H.R. 399, some expressed reservations about it.

Photos of Sen. Ted Cruz (left, R-Texas) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (right, R-Kentucky): AP Images

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