



Obama Meets with Hispanic Caucus About Immigration Reform

Conservatives' fears that the lame-duck session may witness the passage of controversial legislations such as the DREAM Act were given wings when members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus met with President Obama on Tuesday.

Meeting with Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey, Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Illinois and Rep. Nydia Velazquez of New York, Obama discussed the potential passage of Menendez's immigration bill before the start of the 112th session of Congress, as well as that of the DREAM Act.



According to *Congressional Quarterly*, "The [Menendez] legislation would increase workplace enforcement, overhaul the visa system, increase border security and create a process for the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the country to earn legal status."

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Congressional Quarterly reports that the legislation could face partisan obstacles, however. "Menendez said the president's support for an eleventh-hour push would likely hinge on whether any Republicans are behind such an effort."

Menendez explained that "The White House is ready and willing" to support the legislation as long as Republicans supported it. "I just hope we get some indications from some of our Republican colleagues as to their willingness to move forward."

In previous meetings between Obama and Menendez, the President has made clear that without bipartisan support on immigration legislation, he could not move forward.

Menendez declared, "If there is bipartisan support, then he certainly is very well-disposed to moving forward, and that's what remains to be seen."

Menendez has been an outspoken supporter of "comprehensive immigration reform," also known as amnesty, as well as an avid supporter of Harry Reid's DREAM Act, which would provide legal status to illegal aliens who have enrolled in a university or enlisted in the military.

Immediately following Reid's reelection, he declared the passage of the DREAM Act to be a priority, likely because of the reported impact of the Hispanic vote on his victory. The DREAM Act died a few months ago in the Senate when Harry Reid neatly tucked the controversial legislation into the military defense authorization bill. The Republicans staged a filibuster against his defense bill in response, some of whom asserted that the act should be given its own separate up or down vote.

Democrat Lincoln Diaz-Balart of Florida — who is retiring at the end of this year — has requested that Pelosi bring the DREAM Act vote to the floor during the lame-duck session, noting that such a bill would



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 17, 2010

not be successful in the 112th session of Congress.

“Every day the Speaker waits to consider the American DREAM Act is yet another day these deserving students are being punished for decisions not made by them, but by their parents,” Diaz-Balart indicated in a statement.

Diaz-Balart is intimidated by the notion that Texas Republican Lamar Smith and Iowa Republican Steve King, two ardent opponents of illegal immigration, are expected to take control of immigration legislation in the House.

With the Democrats losing six Senate seats and total control of the House of Representatives, it seems the lame-duck session may be their last opportunity to push immigration reform.

Congressional Quarterly writes, however, “Republicans have dismissed the prospect of Menendez’ bill passing during the lame-duck session, given its complexity.”

With so many red-state Democrats up for reelection in 2012, the Republicans likely have little with which to be concerned in the area of immigration legislation.

Mickey Kaus of [Newsweek](#), however, remains anxious over the potential passage of the DREAM Act, explaining his concerns:

I’m told the lame duck Congress has so many huge bills to consider (extension of the Bush tax cuts, the revived estate tax, the alternative minimum tax, the huge pending cut in Medicare doctor reimbursements, etc.) that there won’t be any time for the little old DREAM Act. Some DREAM Act opponents have accepted this line of reasoning.

They may be right. But it seems to me the trainwreck of big legislative issues is another reason for DREAM opponents to worry. Why? Precisely because compared with the giant, headline-grabbing issues, DREAM looks like small potatoes.

Kaus also raises concerns over the Republicans’ inability to remain steadfast on issues such as this:

Suppose the Democrats fight furiously against a big item on the GOP wish list — say, extending the Bush tax cuts for those making more than \$250,000 — but suddenly let Republicans know that they will cave, and give their opponents a huge victory, if only the GOP agrees to slide this little immigration provision into the larger bill. Will Republicans have the fortitude to say “no”?

The answer to that question likely varies depending upon the Republican.

Nevertheless, as is typically the case, even if the DREAM Act fails in the lame duck session, it will likely be revived at some point in the future. After all, the bill was first introduced in 2001 and yet continues to be debated nine years later.

Photo: Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus gather to support the Obama health care reform bill on March 18, 2010: AP Images



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