

How to Pass Immigration Reform

Michael Sean Winters | May. 27, 2010 NCR Today

In Washington, a prospective policy always faces two hurdles. Is it the right thing to do? And, is it politically feasible to do? Between now and the November midterm elections, the second question becomes more and more difficult and the need for comprehensive immigration reform is in danger of falling by the wayside because of the lack of political will to accomplish a policy that everyone knows must be enacted.

What to do? The President should send up to Congress the exact same proposal on comprehensive immigration reform that his predecessor, George W. Bush, sent to Congress and which was killed in 2007. That proposal may or may not be exactly what the Democrats would want, but it would be a great improvement over the current law. And, the political onus would be placed on those Republicans who supported the Bush proposal then to explain why they do not now support the exact same proposal.

Sen. John McCain has been giving the nation a profile in cowardice, backing off the issue first during the GOP primaries in 2008 and becoming a born-again Minuteman in his current primary battle. His performance has been shameful. But, other GOP senators backed the Bush plan and do not face primary challengers this year. Would enough of them do the right thing?

Immigration reform cannot wait. President Obama promised to tackle the issue in his first year in office. That promise came before health care reform took about one year longer than expected which threw off the entire legislative agenda. There are some Democrats from Rustbelt districts for whom immigration reform is not a great issue, but not that many. And, once the GOP candidates get past the primaries, they will be looking for issues on which they can tack back to the center. For the President, putting forward the exact same proposal as George Bush first suggested would burnish his bi-partisan credentials. Most of all, immigration reform is the right thing to do.

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