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'Gang of 8' bill must make immigrants full, not second-class, citizens

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The votes in the Senate Tuesday to allow the immigration bill to advance for debate [1] on the chamber?s floor are a good indication that a bill will be passed.

In general I support what is being proposed [2] by the so-called ?Gang of 8,? especially allowing millions of immigrants living in the country illegally and their families to obtain legal status after years of uncertainty and apprehensiveness.

At the same time, I am bothered by some of the provisions of the bill. One is that it will only further the second-class status of these immigrants. By that I mean that under the bill they will be denied access to Medicaid, food stamps and many other federal programs.

The argument here is that they don?t deserve such federal assistance because of their previous status as lacking proper documentation for legal residence. But this is punitive.

What is left out of this argument is that these immigrants have been here for years, working hard, contributing to the wealth of this country and doing work that U.S. citizens won?t do. Through their taxes, such as Social Security taxes, they have contributed to our welfare and not theirs.

Under the bill, they won?t be eligible for federal programs for some ten years and maybe more. No, this is punitive, mean-spirited, un-Christian and immoral.

The United States should not perpetuate the continuation of a second-class status for those among us who clean our houses, pick our food, take care of our children, wash our cars, build our houses and offices, and do many other things that benefit American citizens.

We cannot continue to condone a system that denies people -- in this case, immigrants living in the U.S. illegally -- benefits that through their hard work they have earned. I doubt that these provisions will be altered as the bill moves forward, but it is a very un-American part of the legislation.

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Links:
[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-tries-to-bolster-support-for-sweeping-immigration-overhaul/2013/06/11/53830786-d2a8-11e2-a73e-826d299ff459_story.html?hpid=z3
[2] http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/D?d113:6:./temp/~bdRuTE::|/home/LegislativeData.php?n=BSS;c=113|