

Immigration reform still possible in the near future

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Politicians on both sides of the aisle agree that America's current immigration policies leave room for improvement. Agreeing as to what exactly should change, however, is part of a ferocious debate on America's immigration laws that is currently taking place in Washington and throughout the nation. Congress has discussed tighter border security, expanding visa programs and a path to citizenship for immigrants without legal documentation as part of comprehensive reform. After Congress' recent August recess, the differences of opinion remain. Yet policy experts still point to signs that some kind of immigration reform may be on the way.

One reason for reform is demographical. In Texas, for example, there are a majority of "minorities" in the state. Texans, particularly Latinos, with ethnic roots in another country are more likely to back politicians who favor immigration reform, even if they are not affected at an individual level. This in turn could influence politicians in Texas and other southern states that are fighting in primary elections to endorse immigration reform.

Business leaders, too, are quietly coalescing towards an agreement on restructuring the nation's immigration laws. Certain visa programs have created long waits for highly skilled immigrants waiting to work for American companies ready to hire them immediately. Many of America's universities are filled with foreign-born students who must then leave after receiving an education. Manually intensive labor is also in demand, but many businesses cannot afford to hire native-born Americans for the work.

Potential changes

It is yet unclear what reforms have a chance of passing. In June, the Senate passed a bill that would create new visa programs (and expand them), crack down on employers hiring immigrants in the country without legal permission and increase border security. The measure would also have provided a path to U.S. citizenship for undocumented workers. The House did not vote on the bill and has yet to put forth its own proposal.

Current immigration laws

As things stand, it can be a difficult road to navigate America's immigration system. While the Justice Department has indicated it is not actively going after undocumented immigrants, various issues could arise to create issues regarding deportation proceedings, such as a run-in with law enforcement.

The number of visas, eligibility for those visas and the forms to fill out can be a long and frustrating process. A single mistake can mean a months-long delay.

Immigrants seeking entry into the United States or people without legal paperwork should contact an experienced immigration attorney who is familiar with current immigration law and any potential changes that may come about.