

Obama To Anounce Immigration Action

BY JIM KUHNHENN AND
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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a broad test of his executive powers, President Barack Obama declared Wednesday he will sidestep Congress and order his own federal action on immigration — in measures that could spare from deportation as many as 5 million people illegally in the U.S. and set up one of the most pitched partisan confrontations of his presidency.

Obama declared that Washington has allowed America's immigration problem "to fester for too long."

The president will use an 8 p.m. EST address Thursday to announce his measures and will sign the executive actions during a rally in Las Vegas on Friday. In doing so, Obama will be taking an aggressive stand that he had once insisted was beyond his presidential power.

As many as 5 million people in the country illegally are likely to be protected from deportation and made eligible for work permits under the plan. They would not have a path to citizenship, however, and the actions could be reversed by a new president in two years. Officials said the eligible immigrants would not be entitled to federal benefits — including health care tax credits — under Obama's plan.

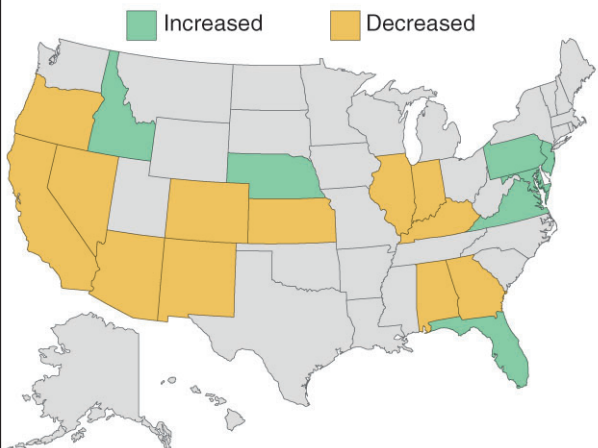
The 5 million estimate includes extending deportation protections to parents and spouses of U.S. citizens and permanent residents who have been in the country for five years. The president also is likely to expand his 2-year-old program that protects young immigrants from deportation. The administration had considered extending the executive action to parents of young immigrants covered under the 2012 Obama directive, but immigration advocates said they did not expect the parents to be included in the final plan.

"What I'm going to be laying out is the things that I can do with my lawful authority as president to make the system better, even as I continue to work with Congress and encourage them to get a bipartisan, comprehensive bill that can solve the entire problem," Obama said in a video on Facebook.

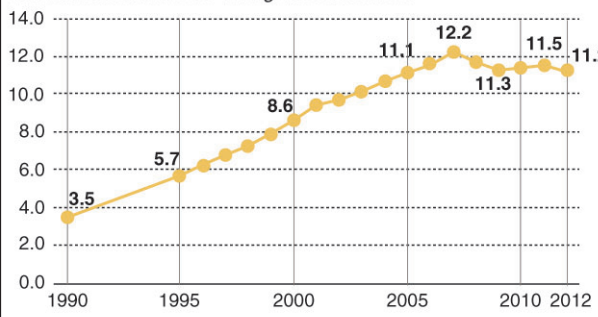
Laying the groundwork for his actions, Obama invited 18 Democratic members of the House and Senate — but no

Illegal immigrant population

States where the number of unauthorized immigrants increased or decreased from 2009 to 2012.



Growth in unauthorized immigration in millions



Source: Pew Research
Graphic: Tribune News Service

Republicans — to dinner at the White House on Wednesday. Among the networks airing his Thursday speech will be Univision, which will interrupt the Latin Grammys to carry his remarks, assuring him a huge Spanish-speaking audience. The major broadcast networks — ABC, CBS and NBC — were not planning to air the speech, but cable news networks were.

Obama is to speak at Las Vegas' Del Sol High School on Friday, a school with a large population of non-English speaking students where Obama unveiled his blueprint for comprehensive immigration legislation in 2013.

Republicans vehemently oppose the president's likely actions but are deeply divided and have spent much of the week intensely debating how to respond. Some conservative members have threatened to pursue a government shutdown and one — two-term Republican Rep. Mo Brooks of Alabama — raised the specter of impeachment on Wednesday.

House Speaker John Boehner's spokesman criticized Obama's planned announcement, noting that the president himself had said in the past that he was not "em-

peror" and was limited in his ability to act.

"If 'Emperor Obama' ignores the American people and announces an amnesty plan that he himself has said over and over again exceeds his constitutional authority, he will cement his legacy of lawlessness and ruin the chances for congressional action on this issue — and many others," the spokesman, Michael Steel, said.

A wide-ranging immigration bill passed the Senate last year, but stalled in the Republican-led House. Senate Democratic leaders on Wednesday took turns declaring their support for Obama's unilateral action, blaming Republican inaction for forcing Obama to act.

"There's one more chance: Just put the bill on the floor, Speaker Boehner," said Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., a lead author of the bill that passed the Senate. "Pass the bill and we will not even have to debate executive action."

Even Republicans who supported the Senate bill that would have overhauled immigration laws said Obama's go-it-alone approach would backfire. Still, they cautioned their party colleagues not to overreach in their response.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who worked on the Senate legislation, said the executive actions would leave the status of millions of immigrants unresolved and would not address what he called a broken immigration system.

"Our response has to be measured — can't capitulate, can't overreact," he said. "Impeachment or shutting down the entire government would be an unwise move."

Adjustments also are expected to a 2012 program that allowed immigrants under 31 who had arrived before June 2007 to apply for a reprieve from deportation and a work permit. More than 600,000 young immigrants have been shielded from deportation to date under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Removing the upper age limit so that applicants don't have to be under 31 — one option under consideration — would make an additional 200,000 people eligible.

In one specific example, about 250,000 farm workers in the United States illegally would receive work permits under Obama's actions, according to Giv Kashkooli, the national political legislative director of the United Farm Workers who met with White House officials and with Obama on Wednesday. The UFW had been hoping for a specific program that would provide work permits to more farm workers.

The 250,000 farm workers would be eligible by being parents of children who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

The beneficiaries of Obama's new executive action would be treated in the same manner as those immigrants who were shielded from deportation in his 2012 directive, according to one official who discussed the limits of Obama's action on the condition of anonymity, lacking authority to speak on the record at this point.

Those young immigrants covered by the 2012 action can obtain work permits but are not eligible for food stamps, federal welfare benefits or disability benefits under the Supplemental Security Income program. They also are ineligible for tax credits under Obama's health care law, though they can buy health coverage at full price on the exchanges created by the law. They may be eligible for public benefits provided by some states.

Former Iraqi Comander Helps Fight IS

BAGHDAD (AP) — The former Islamic State group commander walked into the visitors' room of his Baghdad prison, without the usual yellow jumpsuit and shackles his fellow inmates wear. In slippers and a track suit, he greeted guards with a big smile, kissing them on the cheeks.

The scene testifies to the strange path of Abu Shahr, a 36-year-old who joined al-Qaida out of anger over treatment of Iraq's Sunnis and rose in the group as it transformed into the extremist juggernaut now called the Islamic State. Finally, he became an informant against the group after his capture.

Arrested in late 2013, he was presented a choice by Iraqi security officials: Help them against the extremists and in return he would get jailhouse perks. Now with relatively free rein inside the confines of a maximum security prison complex, Abu Shahr can play with his five children, enjoy supervised visits and buddy up with the guards.

Security officials say he has given them guidance on the extremists' tactics and helped them find, capture and interrogate suspected militants. In Salahuddin province, a key front line north of Baghdad, he helped the military win back key areas this week, including the town of Beiji, where troops secured Iraq's largest oil refinery.

He clearly has been willing to act against his former group in return for access to his family — and perhaps, implicitly, to prevent any government action against them. But his personal sentiment toward the militants is hard to gauge. Speaking to The Associated Press, he didn't express any remorse for his involvement in the group or directly denounce its actions or talk of any ideological conversion. He only said he never liked the group's ferocious targeting of Shiites and Christians. "It was not supposed to be this way," he said.

Jerusalem On Edge After Jewish Attacks

JERUSALEM (AP) — Streets are subdued, marketplaces are quiet and people are on edge in Jewish areas of Jerusalem, where Arabs have been using meat cleavers, guns, screwdrivers and even their cars in deadly, small-scale attacks.

The holy city — which Israel says must forever stay united — has rarely seemed more divided.

In their 47th year of occupation, Palestinians are seething with anger over neglect and discrimination, continued Jewish settlement in their areas, and a belief, despite official denials, that Israel is scheming to take over their most revered site.

This anger, coupled with Jewish fears of further violence, has left the city's 800,000 residents apprehensive, seemingly united in the belief that things will get worse before they get better.

"I'm really not safe, and before leaving the house I think twice," said Sara Levi, a 22-year-old stay at home mother. "We are not calm, and we hope there is going to be an end to this, and that it is not just a beginning."

No Easy Task To Upload Green Cards

WASHINGTON (AP) — HealthCare.gov is working better, but immigrants are running into what looks like an obvious slip-up.

Call it the green card glitch: The website has no clear path to upload the government identification document that shows they are legal U.S. residents, and entitled to benefits under President Barack Obama's health care law.

It's a baffling omission, say consumers and counselors assisting with this year's sign-up drive.

"It doesn't list the green card as an option to upload," said Elizabeth Colvin of Foundation Communities, an Austin, Texas, group that serves low-income people, including many immigrants. There's a way to upload copies of other types of documentation, Colvin said, but not green cards.

"The limited list of documents is confusing people and needs to be updated to include all accepted documents to verify identity," she added.

U.S. Toughening Stance On Abuses

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's administration is signaling that it will take a harder line against human rights abuses in Venezuela.

An administration official says the White House "would not oppose moving forward with additional sanctions" against the Latin American country's social government.

Over the summer, the State Department imposed a travel ban on Venezuelan officials who it said committed human rights abuses during a crackdown on opposition protests in the spring.

National security adviser Antony Blinken said Wednesday that the administration is looking forward to working with Congress to go further in sanctioning Venezuela. His remarks came during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing to consider his nomination as deputy secretary of state.

2016 Overshadows GOP Governors Meeting

BY STEVE PEOPLES AND
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Associated Press

BOCA RATON, Fla. — No fewer than a half-dozen potential presidential candidates are gathering in Florida as the Republican Governors Association prepares to select its next leader.

The organization's annual conference begins Wednesday in a luxury oceanside resort where the nation's Republican governors will celebrate their party's recent success in the midterm elections. Privately, they're jockeying for position as the 2016 presidential contest looms. None of the most likely White House candidates is expected to seek to replace New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie as chairman, a position with responsibilities that would conflict with the presidential primary season.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker said he would not run for the RGA chairmanship for just that reason.

"It's pretty obvious at least it's something I should consider," Walker said of a White House bid during an interview with The Associated Press. "And if I'm going to do that, I'm not going to put my colleagues in the position of having someone in place who isn't 100 percent committed to the leadership of the organization."

The conference comes two weeks after the GOP's midterm rout, in which they gained control of Congress and expanded their majority of governorships across the country. In January the Republican Party will control 31 compared with Democrats' 19. The party's strong performance offers a presidential springboard to governors who won re-election, Walker among them, and others, like Christie, who played a leading role in the GOP's success.

While Hillary Rodham Clinton remains the overwhelming Democratic front-runner should she seek the presidency, the prospective Republican field is crowded and without a clear leader. A handful of Senate Republicans may join the 2016 contest, but many donors and party officials would prefer a

presidential nominee to emerge from the ranks of the Republican governors, who have executive experience and are not tainted by Congress' low approval ratings.

Christie arrives in Florida in a strong position after having broadened his national network while raising tens of millions of dollars to

help elect Republican governors. Christie and Walker will spend this week alongside a list of other prospective presidential candidates that includes Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, Ohio Gov. John Kasich and Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder.

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