

BREITBART.COM

JUST THE NEWS...

Google™

Search Web

Search Ar

SOURCE: REUTERS · ASSOCIATED PRESS · AFP · US NEWswire · DRUDGE REPORT


NEWS: BREAKING · WORLD · US · POL · BIZ · ENT · LIFE · SCI · ODD · SPORTS



ADVERTISEMENT

Senate OKs Border Fence, Backs Citizenship

May 17 8:31 PM US/Eastern

 [Email this story](#)

By *DAVID ESPO*
AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON

The Senate agreed to give millions of illegal immigrants a shot at U.S. citizenship and backed construction of 370 miles of triple-layered fencing along the Mexican border Wednesday, but prospects for legislation clearing Congress were clouded by a withering attack against President Bush by a prominent House Republican.

"Regardless of what the president says, what he is proposing is amnesty," said Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis. the lawmaker who would lead House negotiators in any attempt to draft a compromise immigration bill later this year.



The blast by Sensenbrenner, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, came on the day the White House dispatched top presidential aide Karl Rove to ease the concerns of rebellious House Republicans and Bush made a pitch for his approach before wealthy GOP donors.

The president insisted that he has no interest in amnesty for illegals, and appealed for an appreciation for every immigrant whose hard work "lifts the spirit of this country."

"The Republican Party needs to lead on the issue of immigration. The immigration system is not working and we need to do something about it now," he said at a Washington gala that raised \$17 million for the national GOP. "America can be a lawful society and a welcoming society and we don't have to choose between the two."

Earlier, GOP senators clashed on the Senate floor.

"This is not amnesty, so let's get the terms right," Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska lectured fellow Republicans who condemned the bill. "Come on. Let's stop the nonsense."

AP Associated Press

ADVERTISEMENT

WAL*MA
PHARMA



WAL*MA
PHARMA

"It sort of reminds me of the famous line, 'Methinks thou dost protest too much,'" responded Sen. David Vitter, R-La., who repeatedly described the legislation as an amnesty bill for lawbreakers.

Rhetoric aside, the votes on the Senate floor gave fresh momentum to legislation that closely follows Bush's call for a broad bill. The measure includes steps to secure the borders, the citizenship-related provisions for illegal immigrants and a new guest worker program for as many as 200,000 people a year. Senate passage appears likely next week.

The political wheels turned as demonstrators massed within sight of the Capitol demanding greater rights for immigrants, the latest evidence of rising passions in connection with efforts to write the most significant overhaul of immigration law in two decades.

With the administration eager to emphasize its commitment to border security, officials continued to flesh out details of Bush's Monday night announcement that he would send up to 6,000 National Guard troops to states along the Mexican border.

Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, raised the possibility that Guard members could be sent over the objections of a state's governor.

"If a governor truly did not want this mission performed in their state, then the option is there for the president and the secretary of defense to federalize the Guard. And then the mission would be conducted, and then it would be without the control of the governor," he said.

Vitter led the drive to strip from the bill a provision giving an eventual chance at citizenship to illegal immigrants who have been in the country more than two years. His attempt failed, 66-33, at the hands of a bipartisan coalition, and the provision survived. In all, 41 Democrats joined with 24 Republicans and one independent to turn back the proposal. Opponents included the leaders of both parties, Sens. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., and Harry Reid, D-Nev. Thirty-one Republicans and two Democrats supported Vitter's amendment.

The vote to build what supporters called a "real fence" _ as distinct from the virtual fence already incorporated in the legislation _ was 83-16. The fence would be built in areas "most often used by smugglers and illegal aliens," as determined by federal officials. Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., estimated the cost at roughly \$3.2 million per mile, more than \$900 million for 300 miles.

The provision includes a call for construction of 500 miles of vehicle barriers, adding to a system currently in place.

It marked the first significant victory for conservatives eager to leave their stamp on a measure that looks increasingly like it is headed toward Senate passage.

Construction would send "a signal that open-border days are over. ... Good fences make good neighbors, fences don't make bad neighbors," Sessions said. He said border areas where barriers are in place have experienced economic improvement and reduced crime.

"What we have here has become a symbol for the right wing in American politics," countered Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill. He said if the proposal passed, "our relationship with Mexico would come down to a barrier between our two countries."

All Republicans and more than half the Senate's Democrats supported the proposal. A core group of bill supporters who have held off other more serious challenges in the past two days made little attempt to fight this one, judging it far less damaging than the attack on the citizenship provision or an attempt on Tuesday to strip out a guest worker program.

Supporters of the Senate measure credited Bush's prime-time Monday night speech with giving fresh momentum to the effort to pass long- stalled legislation.

Across the Capitol in the House, the story was different.

Sensenbrenner's remarks were unusually sharp, given his chairmanship. "He said four times this is not amnesty. Well, it is an amnesty, because it allows people who have broken the law to stay in the country," he said of the positions Bush staked out in his speech earlier in the week.

In a conference call with reporters, Sensenbrenner also said Bush had "basically turned his back" on a tough border security bill after requesting that certain provisions be included before passage last year.

The House legislation passed over strenuous Democratic opposition. It would make all illegal aliens subject to prosecution as felons and calls for construction of a 700-mile fence along the Mexican border _ more than twice as long as the barrier the Senate backed during the day.

Several members of the rank-and-file have criticized Bush for his proposals. To calm their concerns, Rove attended the regular closed door meeting of the rank and file, where participants said he sought to reassure lawmakers about the administration's commitment to securing the borders.

Associated Press writer Fred Frommer contributed to this story.

Copyright 2006 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

OTHER TOP STORIES

HEADLINE	DATE	SOURCE
<u>Tape Shows Man Fell Overboard From Cruise</u>	May 17 8:35 PM US/Eastern	AP
<u>Marines killed Iraqi civilians 'in cold blood': US lawmaker</u>	May 17 8:39 PM US/Eastern	AFP
<u>Ron Howard Answers 'Da Vinci' Critics</u>	May 17 4:17 PM US/Eastern	AP
<u>Senate OKs Border Fence, Backs Citizenship</u>	May 17 8:31 PM US/Eastern	AP
<u>Woman Shoots Gator That Attacks Her Dog</u>	May 17 10:41 AM US/Eastern	AP
<u>Critics crucify 'Da Vinci Code' in Cannes</u>	May 17 4:32 AM US/Eastern	AFP
<u>Rove Tries to Court GOP on Immigration</u>	May 17 12:58 PM US/Eastern	AP
<u>Another 'Idol' Gets the Boot, Leaving Two</u>	May 18 4:14 AM US/Eastern	AP
<u>Teen Accused of Sign Theft May Be Deported</u>	May 17 3:38 PM US/Eastern	AP
<u>Interest Rates Has Wall Street Puzzled</u>	May 18 3:12 AM US/Eastern	AP

