

ANOTHER BUMP IN THE ROAD
FOR COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM



by

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Recent reports indicate that Rep. Mike Pence (R-Indiana) plans on introducing yet another immigration reform bill in this year's Congress. As Rep. Pence puts it, his bill is a "no amnesty" approach to fixing the immigration problem. To say the least, his proposed bill leaves a lot to be desired. Its planned introduction is problematic in three major ways:

1. It will add yet another immigration bill to the already troubled immigration debate in the Senate. The House of Representatives and the Senate have each already passed their own separate immigration bills. Rather than trying to work out a compromise version of the two existing bills, the House (led by its Republican base) has launched a series of field hearings to take place at various places throughout the United States this summer. The Republicans say that the rationale for the field hearings is to gain the pulse of the American people on immigration reform. In reality, the field hearings are a delay tactic (the hearings will take place over the next several months, thus not leaving enough time before the November mid-term Congressional elections to work out a compromise immigration bill) and an attempt to sidetrack the movement for comprehensive immigration reform (many believe that the House Republicans are seeking to secure enough anti-immigrant sentiment through its field hearings to sidetrack the immigration reform process entirely). With the waters already muddied at this point, yet another immigration bill such as the one proposed by Rep. Pence will only add to the confusion.
2. Rep. Pence's plan seeks to incorporate most of the House bill (H.R. 4437) with only minor changes. If you recall, H.R. 4437 (passed in December 2005) provides for enforcement-only immigration reform and would make felons out of any immigrant here illegally, even as a result of technical or minor status violations.
3. Rep. Pence's plan calls for an extremely limited guest worker program which would require immigrants to "self-deport" before becoming eligible for any guest worker program. This "guest worker" program would not take place, however, until the borders are secured (when that near-impossible goal is accomplished is anybody's guess).

With that in mind, I personally e-mailed Rep. Pence to express my displeasure with his proposal. Following is the text of my e-mail correspondence:

Rep. Pence, I am (to say the least) disturbed and upset by your planned action of introducing the self-proclaimed Pence Plan in Congress rather than encouraging debate and conference action on Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

As you know, the House and Senate have each passed their own versions of an immigration reform plan. Unfortunately, rather than addressing the issue "head on" and trying to reach a middle ground that the entire Senate can agree upon, you and many other Republicans refuse to acknowledge what the overwhelming majority of American people want -- COMPREHENSIVE reform. Launching your own bill (the Pence Plan) when the House and Senate have already passed their own bills is a needless waste of time and money. The American people deserve better -- we deserve an "up or down" vote on COMPREHENSIVE immigration reform, not the introduction of unrealistic bills to cater to your right-wing, narrow-minded constituency. If this Congress cannot agree on a comprehensive solution to the broken immigration system, then I would understand if you introduced your bill in the NEXT Congress. For the time being, however, I strongly encourage you to let this Congress have its debate on the immigration bills already passed by the House and the Senate.

Your approach of enforcement-only then a limited guest worker program is not realistic, will not solve the immigration problem and has already been rejected by the Senate when it passed its version (if you followed the Senate debate leading up to passage of its bill, an amendment to the Senate bill requiring an enforcement-only approach before a guest worker program could be introduced was flatly rejected by the Senate Judiciary Committee chaired by Sen. Specter. Why then would you waste the Congress's time by introducing your bill after the Senate already rejected that approach?

I urge you to reconsider your flawed plan before you further waste this Congress's valuable time yet again.

Stay tuned to www.longchangoonline.com for further updates on the movement for comprehensive immigration reform!

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