

Policy Mic



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Immigration Reform 2013: 6 Things You Need to Know About the Senate Bill

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Immigration Reform 2013: 6 Things You Need to Know About the Senate Bill

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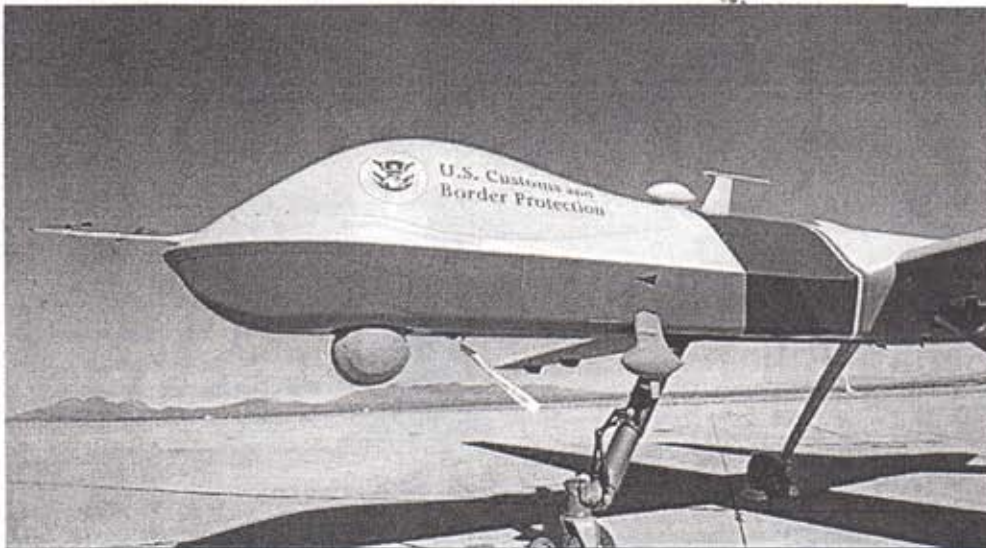
"As a nation, we have the right and responsibility to make our borders safe, to establish clear and just rules for seeking citizenship, to control the flow of legal immigration, and to eliminate illegal immigration, which in some cases has become a threat to our national security."

So reads the beginning of the Gang of Eight's immigration reform act, which recently passed with a convincing 68-32 majority in the Senate. The bill, formally titled "The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act," has garnered praise for its bipartisan support in the Senate and has been deemed a historic step towards a new era of American immigration policy.

But what, exactly, does this behemoth, 844-page (not including the 350+ pages of amendments) bill do in the first place?

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1. It Transforms the Border Into a Military Zone



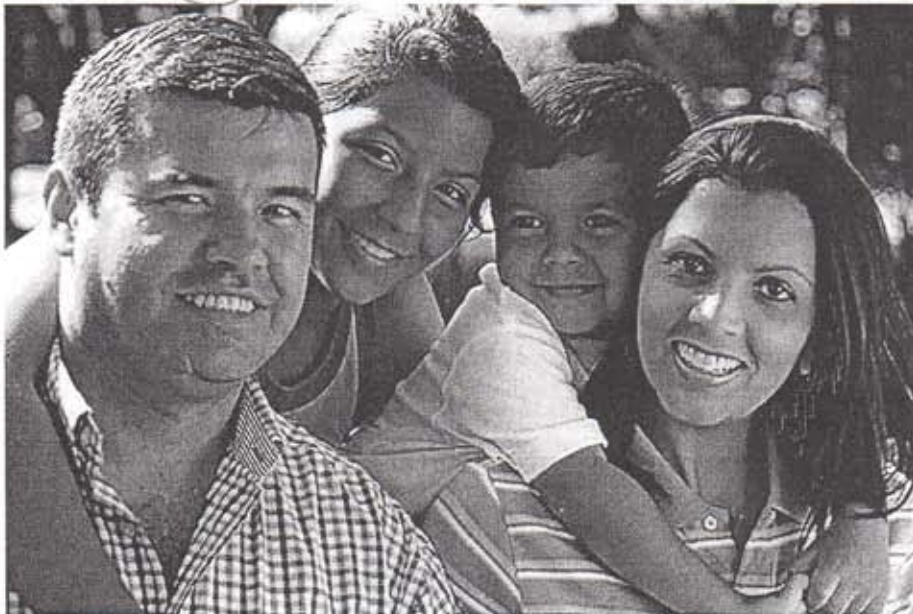
Via: Global Post

First and foremost, in order to win over GOP votes in the Senate, the eight original authors of the bill agreed to a proposal that nearly doubles the number of border security agents from 21,000 to 40,000 and calls for 700 miles of new fence — also double the original amount — to be constructed along the U.S.-Mexico border.

This surge in border security will cost approximately \$25 billion, according to the Senate. In addition, the same proposal, authored by Republican Senators Bob Corker and John Hoeven, also includes a \$3.2 billion high-tech border surveillance plan that will make use of drones, infrared ground sensors and long-range thermal imaging cameras.

"Literally, it will almost militarize the border," said Senator Lindsey Graham, one of the four Republican members of the Gang of Eight.

2. It Creates a Path to Citizenship for Undocumented Immigrants



Via: Osas Iyamu, LLC

The primary purpose of the immigration bill is to lay out a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.

This path is long — it is designed to take approximately 13 years — and is riddled with security checks that immigrants must first pass. Furthermore, it won't go into effect until the aforementioned border security measures are already in place.

3. It Tightens Travel and Employment Restrictions Nationwide



Via: Jet Blue

In an effort to crack down on immigrants who overstay their visas, the Corker-Hoeven amendment calls for an electronic entry/exit system at all American airports and seaports that tracks when visitors enter and leave the country.

The amendment also mandates that all employers in the United States adopt an E-Verify system to prevent businesses from hiring illegal immigrants.

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4. It Will Shrink the Deficit By \$900 Billion

The Congressional Budget Office recently released a report that estimates that if the Senate bill becomes law, it will shrink the deficit by an estimated \$192 billion in the next 10 years, and over \$700 billion in the following decade.

The CBO asserts that the bill would cause the population of the U.S. to increase by 10.4 million by 2023. The resulting increase in federal tax revenue would be enormous, it reports, but would first require a \$262 billion increase in federal spending, "particularly for the Medicaid program and for subsidies provided through insurance exchanges created under the Affordable Care Act."

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5. It Won't Do Anything Until It's Passed By the House of Representatives

A deficit occurs -
when the government
spends more money
than they take in
on an annual
basis.

expenses vs. revenues

4

It's looking increasingly unlikely that the House will vote to pass the BSEOIMA (what a mouthful) before the August recess.

House Republicans have also vowed to make life difficult for the immigration bill. Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner said at a press conference before the bill passed in the Senate, "The House is not going to take up and vote on whatever the Senate passes."

House Chief Deputy Whip Peter Roskam (R-Ill.) told reporters that "it is a pipe dream to think that bill is going to the floor and is going to be voted on." In fact, House conservatives have already threatened to depose Boehner if he bring the bill to the floor without a Republican majority on board.

6. No One Knows Exactly What It Will Do Until It Goes Into Effect



Via: Tim O'Brien

Aside from the bill's highlights — the border security increase, the pathway to citizenship, the travel and employment checks — no one really knows what the bill's 1,200 pages of "comprehensive immigration reform legislation" will do until the bill becomes law.

Despite the fact that the bill was a product of months of bipartisan negotiations in the Senate, even the senators who voted to pass the bill this week didn't have enough time to read the bill's final version.

When pressed on a radio talk show for more details about his own amendment to the immigration bill, Senator Hoeven struggled to explain to conservative host Hugh Hewitt how his amendment actually guaranteed the construction of the much-cited 700 miles of new border fence.