

## **Move the Immigration Bill**

The Washington Post

September 04, 1996, Wednesday, Final Edition

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**Section:** EDITORIAL; Pg. A14

**Length:** 441 words

### **Body**

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ONE OF THE most important, substantive **bills** left for Congress to consider in the short session before the elections is a long-sought revision of the **immigration** law governing illegal aliens. But the legislation, which has passed both houses, is hung up because the House refuses to appoint conferees. The stall is due to an effort to make an unacceptable House provision palatable by compromise. Instead, it should be abandoned.

We refer to the Gallegly amendment, which would allow states to bar the children of illegal aliens from the public schools. The proposal addresses a real problem. Only a handful of states are home to 85 percent of these aliens, and they -- California in particular -- have incurred enormous expenses in educating children whose parents have entered this country without proper documents.

But the solution is not to bar these children from the classroom. Most of them will probably spend their whole lives here, and it is shortsighted to deny them an education. Proposed compromises, including grandfathering children already in school or allowing the children to attend classes if they pay tuition, don't solve the problem. Instead, the federal government must provide more help to those states that bear this special burden, since the failure to control the borders is Washington's responsibility.

Some of the **immigration bill**'s provisions have been superseded by the passage of welfare reform legislation that sets new limits on the federal benefits that can be received even by legal immigrants. But there may be an opportunity here to soften those changes, using the **immigration bill** as a vehicle. In addition, a provision in the Senate-passed **bill** sponsored by Sen. Patrick Leahy is designed to correct a terrible flaw in the terrorism **bill** passed last April. That **bill** created a presumption that anyone seeking asylum in this country who enters with false documents or has traveled through other countries to get here does not have a valid claim. Such a person would have to make his case to an **immigration** officer on the scene without the guarantee of a lawyer or interpreter and could be summarily deported without any hearing or judicial review.

In fact, many persecuted people have to leave home without documents, using false identity papers. And it is not unusual to pass through other countries en route to America. These people ought to have a better chance to prove their case than the law now allows. Sen. Leahy's amendment would provide that opportunity. It is important that the **immigration** legislation **move** to conference and that the Senate language on this matter be accepted.

### **Classification**

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); LEGISLATION (90%); CHILDREN (90%); **IMMIGRATION** (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); **IMMIGRATION** LAW (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE LAW (77%); POLITICAL ASYLUM (77%); EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS

Move the Immigration Bill

(75%); TUITION FEES (75%); LAWYERS (74%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (73%); BORDER CONTROL (72%); PUBLIC SCHOOLS (70%); JUDICIAL REVIEW (62%); TERRORISM (50%)

**Industry:** EDUCATION SYSTEMS & INSTITUTIONS (75%); LAWYERS (74%); PUBLIC SCHOOLS (70%)

**Person:** PATRICK LEAHY (58%)

**Geographic:** CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (92%)

**Load-Date:** September 4, 1996

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