

OVERHAUL OF IMMIGRATION LAW GAINS IN SENATE

The New York Times

May 29, 1982, Saturday, Late City Final Edition

Copyright 1982 The New York Times Company

Section: Section 1; Page 7, Column 1; National Desk

Length: 588 words

Byline: AP

Dateline: WASHINGTON, May 28

Body

The Senate Judiciary Committee has approved a bill to overhaul the nation's immigration law in a major step toward resolving a long-term dispute.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, was the lone dissenter Thursday as the panel voted, 16 to 1, to send the proposal to the Senate.

Just minutes before the final vote, Mr. Kennedy won a concession that would greatly increase the number of illegal aliens now in the country who would be eligible for legal status.

WASHINGTON, May 28 (AP) - The Senate Judiciary Committee has approved a bill to overhaul the nation's immigration law in a major step toward resolving a long-term dispute.

The Republican-controlled committee, by an 8-to-7 vote, approved Mr. Kennedy's proposal to give temporary legal status to illegal aliens who could prove they had been here since Jan. 1.

Another version had set the date at Jan. 1, 1980, the same as in a similar immigration bill pending before the House Judiciary Committee.

The difference of two years could mean legal status for five million illegal immigrants, or 500,000 more aliens than would otherwise be eligible, according to Reagan Administration and committee figures. It is estimated that there are six million illegal aliens in the United States.

Temporary legal status would be the first step for an illegal alien to gain citizenship. However, some illegal aliens say they are fearful of stepping forward and acknowledging their illegal status.

Administration officials said that if Congress agreed on the 1982 date, President Reagan would probably accept it. The Administration had recommended Jan. 1, 1981, as the cut-off date.

The bill also proposed permanent legal residence for any immigrant here before Jan. 1, 1978.

Penalties Against Employers

The measure would also impose the first civil and criminal penalties against employers who knowingly hired immigrants who lacked legal status.

Mr. Kennedy objected to that provision. He said he was worried that employers, out of fear of being fined and sentenced to jail, would automatically reject job applications from people of Hispanic descent.

OVERHAUL OF IMMIGRATION LAW GAINS IN SENATE

Mr. Kennedy had unsuccessfully proposed that such sanctions against employers be automatically canceled after two years unless the President could certify that they were not being used to discriminate against members of minority groups.

In recent years attempts to change the immigration law have stalled in Congress as proposals got caught between opposition from many sides. Hispanic groups, among others, favored eased restrictions on immigrants, while opponents pushed for stricter measures to guard the nation's borders.

The committee vote on Thursday suggested that Congress might be ready after years of stalemate to overhaul the immigration laws. Bipartisan praise was showered on Senator Alan K. Simpson, Republican of Wyoming, the sponsor of the measure, for working out a painstaking compromise. The House version, which is close to the Simpson bill but not exactly the same, is sponsored by Representative Romano L. Mazzoli, Democrat of Kentucky.

Both measures contain the proposed sanctions against employers. An employer would be required to check a job applicant's eligibility by asking him to show either a birth certificate or passport and a Social Security card or driver's license.

The legislation envisions that after three years the Government would develop a means of checking legal status, through an identification card or through a computerized data bank.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (92%); IMMIGRATION (91%); APPROVALS (90%); LEGISLATION (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); US PRESIDENTS (87%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); PENDING LEGISLATION (78%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (78%); MINORITY GROUPS (78%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (77%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (73%); FINES & PENALTIES (67%); SENTENCING (62%); EMPLOYMENT SEARCH (62%); CRIMINAL FINES (62%); JAIL SENTENCING (62%)

Person: TED KENNEDY (79%); RONALD REAGAN (79%)

Geographic: UNITED STATES (92%)