

DEAL NEAR ON IMMIGRATION BILL COMPROMISE CALLS FOR CHARGING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TUITION

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Body

States would be allowed to **charge illegal immigrants tuition** instead of kicking them out of public schools under a **deal** that may free a landmark **bill** from legislative limbo as early as today.

The chief sponsor of the controversial education provision, Rep. Elton Gallegly, R-Oxnard, said he reached a **deal** with Senate negotiators Thursday night to settle the stickiest part of the far-reaching **bill** to crack down on **illegal immigration**.

The conferees' **compromise** would soften a provision in the House **bill** that would have immediately expelled **illegal immigrant** students from public schools.

Instead, **illegal immigrant** children now in public schools could remain until they reach the seventh grade. At that point, they would be subject to deportation unless they paid **tuition**, about \$6,000 a year in California. States could still deny public education to all children who enroll after Sept. 30 of this year, and students who change school districts could face expulsion or **tuition**.

But since few **illegal immigrants** could afford the **tuition**, the practical effect is almost identical to the original provision and is likely to limit its popularity.

Still, the **compromise** attracted key support among **immigration** negotiators and could clear the way for floor votes of the most comprehensive changes in U.S. **immigration** policy in 70 years.

"This is a big day for those who are concerned about stopping the unchecked flow of **immigration** into this country," a gleeful Gallegly said.

The timing of floor votes in the House and Senate is uncertain, however.

Lawmakers are racing toward summer recess. And although GOP leaders would love to ride into San Diego for the Republican National Convention later this month with an **immigration bill** to promote, final passage probably won't come until fall.

President Clinton has threatened to veto the **bill** if Gallegly's amendment, which a presidential spokesman **called** "a nutty idea," made it into the final version. Forty-seven senators have said they would oppose the entire package if the earlier education language survived, and a Democratic filibuster is likely.

"You haven't heard the president himself say flatly he's going to veto this," Gallegly said, predicting Clinton would sign it. "He'll probably be **calling** it the **Bill** Clinton **bill** before it's all over."

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Republicans, however, would like nothing more than to force Clinton's veto of popular measures to fight illegal immigration, which passed the House and the Senate by overwhelming margins earlier this year.

The immigration bill would sharply increase funding for the Border Patrol and contains other stringent measures to fight illegal immigration. The House bill calls for a fortified border fence near San Diego and would establish a pilot employee-identification system. The Senate version did not include giving states the power to deny education to illegal immigrant children.

With the most contentious issue settled, conferees hope to wrap up other details today.

The logjam broke Thursday when Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., a swing vote on an 11-member conference committee, agreed to the new version of the education amendment.

Specter is calling for the General Accounting Office to report on the consequences 2 1/2 years after it is enacted. If they are harmful, a vote to repeal the language would be scheduled 15 days after delivery of the GAO report.

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