

Guest-Worker Program Part of Government's Immigration Plan

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Body

The Bush administration yesterday circulated a new plan for immigration reform that would create a quest-worker program for illegal immigrants currently in the country but would require them to return home and pay a large fine to gain permanent U.S. residency.

On the enforcement side, the plan calls for deploying about 6,000 additional Border Patrol agents along the southern border, together with 200 miles of vehicle barriers, 370 miles of fencing and a 300-mile virtual wall of electronic sensors. An employment verification system would feature new, tamper-proof identification cards for immigrants.

The administration has worked on the plan in closed-door sessions with Republican senators since President Bush called for comprehensive immigration reform in his State of the Union address in January. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez have led those discussions, an administration spokesman said.

"We're working with them to build a proposal that will address the problem of illegal immigration and deliver a system that is secure, productive, orderly and fair," said the spokesman, Scott Stanzel. "We hope that this is something that can move forward and reach the president's s desk this year."

A bipartisan bill introduced last week in the House was condemned as an amnesty for illegal immigrants by some Republicans because it calls for a temporary quest-worker program that would give participants a chance to become legal residents.

Under the administration's s plan, illegal immigrants would have to register for temporary status six months after its enactment. "Any alien wishing to transition to legal status must come forward during this time," according to talking points on the plan, "and every household member must be separately enrolled."

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Background checks would follow, and cards, known as Z-visas, would be issued allowing the illegal immigrants to work. The visas would have to be renewed every three years, and an applicant would have to pay each time a \$2,000 fine and a \$1,500 processing fee.

To get permanent legal residency, Z-visa holders would have to return to their home countries and apply to reenter the United States legally through U.S. embassies and consulates. They would also have to pay two large fines, \$2,000 to apply and \$8,000 if approved.

The **plan** would scale back legal **immigration** based on family reunification. It calls "migration of extended family members" a problem because too many people have applied for entry under that designation. "It will take over 30 years to finish processing them on our current path," the administration said in its talking points. The proposal would eliminate preferences for siblings and adult children, and give the **government** discretion to redirect the 50,000 visas that are issued annually for that purpose.

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