

Senate Panel OKs Immigration Bill

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Body

The Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee Wednesday approved by a 5-2 vote a bill to reform the system for handling legal immigration.

The panel also voted to combine the bill with an illegal immigration reform measure previously approved by the subcommittee, and bring a single immigration reform package to the full committee in the next couple of weeks, aides said.

Both bills are sponsored by Senate Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee Chairman Alan Simpson, R-Wyo.

The immigration package now reflects a similar comprehensive reform plan approved by the House Judiciary Committee, and sponsored by House Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Smith, R-Texas.

Both House and Senate legal reform efforts include provisions on employment and family-based immigration intended to protect job opportunities for U.S. workers, and limit family immigrants to "nuclear family" members of U.S. citizens and legal resident aliens.

The Senate panel approved a manager's amendment offered by Simpson to address concerns raised by the business community, especially high-tech companies, staff said. That amendment would strike a bill provision that would have required new foreign graduates of U.S. universities to complete two years of work abroad before being eligible for a non-immigrant worker visa.

In addition, Simpson lowered from 25 percent to 10 percent of a foreign worker's first-year salary or \$10,000 a fee which would be collected from employers to fund scholarships and training for aliens and permanent residents.

Simpson noted his bill would provide a "breathing space" for legal immigration, requiring the Judiciary Committee to "take another look" at immigration levels after five years. This would allow full assimilation of immigrants already in the United States. "My purpose with this legislation is to reduce overall immigration for five years in order to demonstrate to the public that Congress can and will exercise control over immigration," Simpson said.

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