

# **REAGAN AGREES TO PRESS FOR IMMIGRATION BILL**

The New York Times

March 12, 1986, Wednesday, Late City Final Edition

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**Section:** Section A; Page 12, Column 1; National Desk

**Length:** 657 words

**Byline:** By ROBERT PEAR, Special to the New York Times

**Dateline:** WASHINGTON, March 11

## **Body**

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President **Reagan** met today with key members of Congress to express his support for legislation designed to stop the flow of illegal aliens into the United States.

At the meeting, White House officials said, Mr. **Reagan** prodded members of the House of Representatives to take action on a comprehensive **immigration bill** passed by the Senate last September.

The **bill** was sponsored by Senator Alan K. Simpson, Republican of Wyoming, the assistant majority leader, who attended the meeting today in the Oval Office. A similar **bill**, sponsored by Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, is pending before the House Judiciary Committee, of which Mr. Rodino is the chairman. Specifics Are Not Discussed

Mary Kay Hill, a spokesman for Senator Simpson, said the people at the meeting today "did not get into specifics" about what the President or others would do to obtain approval of the legislation. However, she said, Mr. Simpson, who had requested the meeting, was "very pleased" with it.

Among those present, besides Mr. Simpson and Mr. **Reagan**, were Representatives Rodino; Hamilton Fish Jr. of upstate New York, the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee; Romano L. Mazzoli, Democrat of Kentucky, chairman of the Judiciary subcommittee on **immigration**, and Dan Lungren of California, ranking Republican on the subcommittee; Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d; Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, and James C. Miller 3d, director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The Simpson and Rodino **bills** differ in details. However, both would prohibit employers from hiring illegal aliens, provide additional money for enforcement of the **immigration** laws and offer legal status to many aliens already in this country illegally.

### **Reagan Agrees to** Work for It

In an interview tonight, Mr. Rodino said Mr. **Reagan** had given a firm assurance that he was "committed to a comprehensive **immigration** reform **bill**" and would lobby Congress to pass such a measure.

"He understands that the **bill** is going to take a certain amount of money, \$1 billion a year for four years," Mr. Rodino said. "I stated unequivocally that, with all due respect to the President, he would have to be personally involved in pushing this **bill**."

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Mr. Rodino said he had told Mr. **Reagan** that it would be difficult to win passage of the legislation, in part because Beryl W. Sprinkel, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, had "poured some cold water" on it. In a draft report, the council warned that proposals to punish employers could have adverse effects on the economy. This warning was later removed. Farm Labor Would Still Flow The Senate-passed **bill** includes a provision under which farmers could bring up to 350,000 aliens into the United States to harvest perishable fruit and vegetables. The farmers said this provision was necessary to keep crops from rotting in the fields. However, labor unions opposed it, saying it would permit exploitation.

Aides to Mr. Rodino said he was working on a proposal to sidestep this.

Federal officials have estimated that 15 percent of illegal aliens work in agriculture.

There is no reliable count of aliens illegally in the United States. Government estimates range from 3.5 million to 6 million, or somewhat higher.

Representative Lungren said that Mr. **Reagan** had given strong support to the legislation. "On three or four occasions at today's meeting," Mr. Lungren said, "the President indicated his willingness to work in support of the **bill**. Everybody in the Administration is on board."

The House Judiciary Committee tentatively plans to begin work on the Rodino **bill** after the House returns April 8 from a two-week recess.

The Senate passed comprehensive **immigration bills** in 1982, 1983 and 1985. The House passed a **bill** in 1984 by a five-vote margin, but the two houses of Congress could not work out their differences, so the legislation died.

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** US REPUBLICAN PARTY (92%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (91%); POLITICAL PARTIES (90%); TALKS & MEETINGS (90%); LEGISLATION (90%); US PRESIDENTS (90%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (90%); **IMMIGRATION** (89%); **IMMIGRATION** LAW (89%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (78%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (78%); GOVERNMENT BUDGETS (78%); FOREIGN LABOR (78%); APPROVALS (77%); INTERVIEWS (74%); LOBBYING (73%); PUBLIC FINANCE (73%); RECRUITMENT & HIRING (70%); FARM LABOR (66%); ECONOMICS (64%); ECONOMIC NEWS (60%)

**Company:** MARY KAY NORDIC (56%); MARY KAY NORDIC (56%); OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET (54%); OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET (54%)

**Organization:** OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET (54%); OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET (54%); OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET (54%); OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT & BUDGET (54%)

**Industry:** GOVERNMENT BUDGETS (78%); BUDGETS (69%); FARM LABOR (66%); FRUITS & VEGETABLES (60%)

**Person:** RONALD **REAGAN** (79%); DANIEL E LUNGREN (58%)

**Geographic:** NEW YORK, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (93%)

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