

## *In Congress, rooting around the family tree*

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### **Body**

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Rep. Mark Foley loves to tell the story of his grandmother who immigrated from Poland and worked as a motel maid to get her start in America.

She eventually became a citizen and sent a grandson to **Congress**. Foley, a West Palm Beach Republican, says his immigrant heritage gives him a "passionate respect for the freedom and liberties so many of us take for granted."

CONGIMMS

He just doesn't think every baby born in America should automatically be a citizen.

Heart-warming immigration stories are in vogue in **Congress** this month as members begin serious work on two measures that would cut the number of immigrants allowed into the United States legally.

The Senate Judiciary Committee today will take up an enormous immigration-reform bill proposed by Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., which has drawn screams of protest from immigration groups, free marketeers and the business community.

A similar bill by Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, is to reach the House floor in a couple of weeks.

The issue is "very solidly based on emotionalism," said Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa. "It's based on our parents and grandparents, and it is what has made our country great."

Specter waxed nostalgic about Pvt. Harry Specter, his father, who came from Ukraine at age 18, fought in World War I for the United States and carried shrapnel wounds on his legs the rest of his life. He settled in Russell, Kan., and ran a junkyard.

The Irish potato famine in the 1840s apparently is responsible for a number of other members of **Congress** being here.

Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, said his great-great-grandfather came from Ireland on a cattle boat. DeWine wants to let immigrants keep coming. "To turn our back on what history tells us about this country would be a very sad event," he said.

But Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who serves with Specter and DeWine on the Senate committee considering immigration, says times have changed.

Her grandfather at age 14 stowed away on a ship to escape the pogroms in Poland, she said. Her mother escaped the Bolsheviks, arriving in America with no education, no money and very little English.

## In Congress, rooting around the family tree

"They produced a U.S. senator," she said.

Yet nearly 40 percent of America's modern-day immigrants live in California, her state, with another 3.7-million waiting for visas. Feinstein said immigrants are more likely to live in poverty, more likely to need public aid and less likely to have health insurance.

"People are coming in too fast to be able to provide the job opportunities, the homes and the education," she said.

The United States admits about 800,000 immigrants a year legally. In raw numbers, that's about the same as were being admitted at the turn of the century, but it is a much smaller percentage of the population now.

Another 300,000 immigrants are believed to settle illegally in the United States each year. The House and Senate bills attempt to stop that.

A few immigrant citizens serve in **Congress**, including the two Miami Republicans who were born in Havana, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Lincoln Diaz-Balart.

But there's no clue to the ancestry of Simpson and Smith, the sponsors of the bills causing so much fuss. Simpson brags that his father and grandfather were Wyoming lawyers, but he doesn't go back any further. Smith would say only that he's a fifth-generation Texas rancher.

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