

HOUSE APPROVES COMPROMISE BILL ON ILLEGAL ALIENS

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Body

The House of Representatives today approved a compromise immigration bill that lawmakers described as a historic step to curtail the influx of illegal aliens into the United States.

By a vote of 238 to 173, the House agreed to the bill recommended by a conference committee of House and Senate negotiators.

The vote followed an hour of impassioned debate in which Representative Don Edwards, a liberal California Democrat, denounced the bill as "an invitation to racial discrimination" against certain minority groups, particularly Hispanic Americans.

But supporters of the bill said it was time for the nation to close, or at least tighten, its borders. Representative Hamilton Fish Jr., a Republican from upstate New York, said, "This may be our last opportunity for comprehensive immigration reform before the problems at our borders preclude compassionate solutions."
Senate to Vote on Plan

The compromise bill, embodied in a conference report, now goes to the Senate for debate and final approval. If approved by the Senate, as expected, it would be sent to President Reagan for his signature. Mr. Reagan has repeatedly expressed support for such legislation, though Administration officials were not conspicuously lobbying House members to vote for the bill today.

In the House today, 161 Democrats and 77 Republicans voted for the compromise bill. Eighty Democrats and 93 Republicans voted against it.

The bill, which resulted from nearly a decade of work in Congress, would prohibit the hiring of illegal aliens. Employers of illegal aliens would be subject to civil penalties ranging from \$250 to \$10,000 for each such alien hired. The bill would offer legal status to illegal aliens who entered the United States before Jan. 1, 1982, and have lived here continuously since then.

A crucial feature of the bill, which permitted supporters to revive it this month, is a program to assure a steady supply of foreign workers to harvest fruit and vegetables grown on ranches and farms in Western states.

The bill's prohibition on hiring illegal aliens applies to all employers. There is no exemption for employers with just a few employees.

At present, under Federal law, it is generally not illegal for employers to hire illegal aliens. There is one exception: Farm labor contractors may not recruit or employ illegal aliens.

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Representative **Bill** Richardson, a New Mexico Democrat whose mother was born in Mexico, broke with some members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and supported the **bill**. "This is the final hour for immigration reform," he said. "This is the final hour for millions of people who have no lobbyists, but deserve some status in this country. They come from Mexico, from Italy and Greece and every corner of the earth."

'No Realistic Alternative'

Mr. Richardson added: "There is no realistic alternative to this **bill**. I don't want my legacy as a Hispanic to be that I obstructed immigration reform."

Representative Romano L. Mazzoli, a Kentucky Democrat who is a co-sponsor of the legislation, said: "If this **bill** were a cat, this would be its ninth life. It can't pop up out of the grave again. It can't have more life breathed back into its corpse. This is historic legislation, watershed legislation. It is not a perfect **bill**, but it is the least imperfect **bill** we will ever have before us."

But Representative Robert Garcia, Democrat of the Bronx, said, "This **bill** as it stands today is not going to stop **illegal immigrants** from coming into the United States." They come, he said, because they are hungry, and "where hunger is, it will try and find an escape."

Representative Norman Y. Mineta, a California Democrat, said he reluctantly opposed the **bill** because he believed its penalties against employers of **illegal aliens** would "take us inevitably down the road toward invidious racial discrimination."

Provision to Fight Discrimination

Supporters of the **bill** noted that it prohibited employers from discriminating against legal **aliens** merely because they were **aliens**. It creates a new office in the Justice Department to investigate complaints of such discrimination, as well as complaints of bias based on national origin.

Representative Henry B. Gonzalez, a Texas Democrat, complained that the **bill** would permit farmers to keep foreign workers in a state of "indentured servitude."

But Howard L. Berman, a California Democrat who is a longtime ally of organized labor, said, "We have dealt with the asserted needs of Western agriculture in a fashion that protects the legal status and rights and dignity of farm workers."

A lobbyist for the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, Vincent M. Trivelli, said his group was supporting the compromise **bill**.

Representative **Bill** McCollum, a Florida Republican, said he was strongly opposed to the amnesty provision for **illegal aliens**. But he said, "I am going to hold my nose and vote for this conference report because I see employer sanctions as an opportunity to close our borders."

Representative Charles E. Schumer, a Brooklyn Democrat who engineered the agreement on foreign agricultural workers, said: "We are here to solve problems before they become crises. Sure enough, if we do nothing, our immigration problem will become an immigration crisis."

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