

## ***Bipartisan Senate plan for illegals nears vote; McCain: 'We're down the homestretch'***

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### **Body**

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WASHINGTON -- The **Senate** headed Wednesday toward approval of a bill that would provide about 10 million illegal immigrants a chance at citizenship, setting up a showdown with the House that President Bush may have to settle.

A test **vote** Wednesday morning showed strong **bipartisan** support for the comprehensive immigration bill, which includes **plans** to expand visas for "guest workers," fines against employers who hire illegal immigrants and tough border security measures.

The **Senate voted** 73-25 to cut off debate and move ahead to final passage, probably by today.

"**We're down** the **homestretch**," said Sen. John **McCain**, R-Ariz., a key member of what Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., described as "an amazing **bipartisan** coalition" that pushed for the comprehensive approach.

Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., said the bill's offer of citizenship for illegal immigrants expresses the nation's "big-hearted attitude toward those who are taking care of our children and trying to build a better life for themselves."

Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, one of 23 Republicans who **voted** against moving the bill forward, called it "the worst piece of legislation to come before the **Senate**." He is against the citizenship **plans** and wants the focus to be on border security.

Republican and Democratic supporters say the president will have to push hard to get a compromise from a panel that will reconcile differences between the House and **Senate** bills. "He's going to have to weigh in," said Sen. Ken Salazar, D-Colo.

The **Senate** bill includes elements Bush favors but many House Republicans oppose.

Among the **Senate** bill's provisions: expanded opportunities for foreigners to work in the USA and provisions to allow those who have lived here illegally since January 2004 a chance to become citizens. About 2 million illegal immigrants would have to leave the USA.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that if the **Senate** bill becomes law, the nation's population would increase by 8 million over the next 10 years.

The House bill, passed last December on a 239-182 **vote**, focuses largely on border enforcement. It would make illegal immigration a felony and require construction of 700 miles of fence along the U.S.-Mexican border.

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House Judiciary Chairman James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., the author of the House measure, says the **Senate** bill amounts to amnesty for lawbreakers.

Senators acknowledge Sensenbrenner will be a formidable opponent. "Very difficult" is how Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., rates the upcoming negotiations. Other supporters are confident Bush will help them prevail. "I'm optimistic," said Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb.

## Graphic

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