

Groups Make Late Push to Salvage Bill Aiding Illegal Immigrant Students

The New York Times

December 1, 2010 Wednesday, Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2010 The New York Times Company

Section: Section A; Column 0; National Desk; Pg. 17

Length: 854 words

Byline: By JULIA PRESTON

Body

Immigrant advocate **groups** have mobilized across the country in what they call a last-ditch effort to persuade Congress to pass a **bill** that would grant legal status to hundreds of thousands of **illegal immigrant students**, pressing for action in the remaining weeks when Democrats control both houses of Congress.

The **groups** held marches, hunger strikes, prayer vigils and protests at lawmakers' offices on Monday and Tuesday in support of the **bill**, which they call the Dream Act. Opponents are also in high gear, swamping some senators who have not disclosed their positions with faxes and phone calls.

A vote on the **bill** has not been scheduled, but Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, has said he could bring it up as early as this week. While its prospects do not look strong, both sides expect that any measure to legalize **illegal immigrants** would have far slimmer chances in Congress next year, when Republicans will have a majority in the House and increased strength in the Senate.

"We see this as our best opportunity now to get something done," said Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice, a **group** that favors the **bill**.

"Since they are giving it everything, so are we," said Roy Beck, executive director of NumbersUSA, which seeks reduced immigration and opposes the **student bill**. He said his **group** had delivered more than 650,000 faxes to lawmakers in recent days.

"We think if we beat this one we won't have to deal with amnesty for many years to come," Mr. Beck said, referring to legalization legislation.

At the San Antonio offices of Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, 15 protesters supporting the **bill** were arrested Monday night, charged with trespassing. In a statement, Ms. Hutchison, a Republican, said that she had asked that the **students** be escorted from her office without arrests, but that they had resisted.

Ms. Hutchison does not support the **student bill** in its current form, the statement said.

In California on Tuesday, caravans of **students**, **immigrants** and labor union members stopped at offices across the state of eight Republican and four Democratic House members, demanding that they declare support for the legislation. An estimated 550,000 **illegal immigrant students** in California could be eligible for legal status under the **bill**, according to the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan research **group**.

In Washington State, **immigrant** and farm worker **groups** demonstrated outside the offices of Republican House members. In Washington, D.C., **illegal immigrant students** marched into an Army recruiting station and asked to enlist. **Immigrants** who lack legal status are currently prohibited from joining the armed forces.

Groups Make Late Push to Salvage Bill Aiding Illegal Immigrant Students

University presidents in the Northeast and Illinois signed letters of support or attended campus rallies, including leaders at Brown, Harvard, M.I.T. and Northwestern. A coalition of immigrant groups and unions announced a radio and print advertising campaign this week focused on undecided senators from five states.

In the past the bill has enjoyed broader support than other immigration measures because it would benefit young people who were brought to this country illegally by their parents and have generally performed well in school. It would open a path to legal status for illegal immigrant high school graduates who came to the United States before they were 16 years old, have been here for at least five years and have no criminal record, provided they complete two years of college or military service.

But prayers and demonstrations did not appear to be attracting any swell of support to the bill. One of its firmest adversaries, Senator Jeff Sessions, Republican of Alabama, took the lead in marshaling opposition, sending out action alerts detailing a 10-point critique of the bill. He said it would give safe harbor to some immigrants with criminal records and could benefit illegal immigrants who were no longer youths.

Senator Reid is fulfilling a promise from his recent re-election campaign by bringing up the student bill for a vote. His re-election victory came in large part from Latino votes. President Obama has said he wants to see the bill passed now, and Arne Duncan, his secretary of education, has been promoting it in public appearances.

"I think we are fundamentally wrong on this as a nation," Mr. Duncan said in a call Monday with reporters. Illegal immigrant students "have played by all the rules, gone to school, worked hard, full attendance. Then they graduate and the doors of opportunity basically slam shut," he said.

But Republican lawmakers seemed in no hurry to give the Democrats a triumph during the lame-duck session. Some of the protests in support of the bill took place at the Utah offices of Senator Orrin G. Hatch, a Republican who was one of the first sponsors of the bill, early in the decade.

"Knowing full well it won't become law, Democrats are cynically using this legislation for political purposes to curry favor with a political constituency," said Antonia Ferrier, his spokeswoman. She said Mr. Hatch wanted to focus in the current session on tax-cut legislation and other economic issues.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Protesters marched into an Army recruiting station in Washington on Tuesday. Below, demonstrations in Times Square, left, and in Carlsbad, Calif., on Monday in support of legislation that would grant legal status to hundreds of thousands of students. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY DREW ANGERER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

LENNY IGNELZI/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Groups Make Late Push to Salvage Bill Aiding Illegal Immigrant Students

Subject: PROTESTS & DEMONSTRATIONS (90%); IMMIGRATION (90%); POLITICAL PARTIES (90%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (89%); ***ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS*** (89%); CRIMINAL TRESPASS (89%); LEGISLATION (89%); ***STUDENTS & STUDENT*** LIFE (89%); US DEMOCRATIC PARTY (89%); EXECUTIVES (88%); ARMED FORCES (78%); IMMIGRATION REGULATION & POLICY (78%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (78%); ARRESTS (77%); LABOR UNIONS (76%); AMNESTY (73%); ARMIES (63%); MILITARY SERVICE (62%); MILITARY RECRUITING (60%); FARM LABOR (50%)

Industry: ARMED FORCES (78%); ARMIES (63%); MILITARY SERVICE (62%); MARKETING & ADVERTISING (60%); MILITARY RECRUITING (60%); PRINT ADVERTISING (50%); RADIO ADVERTISING (50%); FARM LABOR (50%)

Person: KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON (78%); HARRY REID (58%)

Geographic: CALIFORNIA, USA (92%); NEVADA, USA (79%); WASHINGTON, USA (79%); DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (93%)

Load-Date: December 1, 2010

End of Document