

# **Tough talk isn't enough to stem illegal immigration; BUSH'S PROPOSALS MAY PLACATE GOP ALLIES BUT DON'T ADDRESS KEY ISSUES**

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## **Body**

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President **Bush** went to the epicenters of **illegal immigration** this week to **address** an **issue** that threatens to fracture the Republican and, to a lesser extent, the Democratic, parties in an election year. In speeches in Tucson and El Paso, **Bush** revived his plan for tighter borders coupled with a temporary guest-worker program.

**Bush's proposal** is a good starting point but not an answer. To break the stalemate in Congress, he must either ditch or win over one-note conservatives calling only for more security. And he must go farther than his anti-amnesty rhetoric implies in granting legal status to the 11 million undocumented workers already here.

**Bush** emphasized enforcement and soft-pedaled the worker program in his speeches, which was not surprising, given the audience of Border Patrol agents and growing frustrations along the Rio Grande. In August, Arizona's Democratic governor, Janet Napolitano, declared a state of emergency to free up money to combat crime, cover higher police costs and battle increasing drug trafficking along the border.

The **Bush** administration is **proposing** hiring more border agents, installing high-tech sensors and, in some areas, building barriers and fences. It also wants to deport **illegal** immigrants to their hometowns, instead of releasing them just across the border. Next month, the Republican-dominated House is expected to include these and other measures in an enforcement-only bill.

Then the battle over reform will shift to the Senate, in a contest between bills co-sponsored by Arizona's two Republican senators, John Kyl and John McCain. Both would create temporary visas, probably lasting six years, for farm work and hard-to-fill jobs. Undocumented immigrants working here now could apply. But under the bill sponsored by Kyl and Sen. John Cronyn, R-Texas, undocumented workers first would have to move back to their native country and return there permanently once the visas ended.

Consider the practical implications of uprooting and deporting millions of immigrants and families who have lived stable and constructive lives in the United States for years. The process would be potentially explosive, prohibitively expensive and futile. Most would never seek visas, continuing the underground economy that would undermine the visa system. That's why the bill co-sponsored by McCain and Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., would offer undocumented workers in the program an opportunity eventually to seek permanent residency or citizenship, but only after they paid a big fine and took a criminal background check.

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In repeating his blanket opposition to amnesty for undocumented workers, ***Bush*** is pacifying conservatives at the expense of bipartisan support. And he's backing himself into a corner just when he needs room to negotiate practical and equitable reforms.

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